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Honoré de Balzac

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The Human Comedy

PHILOSOPHIC AND ANALYTIC STUDIES

VOLUME IX

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FATMÉ'S LIFE THREATENED

The Arab sprang into the air like a lion's whelp, and drew his kandjar *with a roar.*

Honoré de Balzac

NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME COMPLETELY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE PETTY WORRIES OF CONJUGAL LIFE

BY

G. BURNHAM IVES

ILLUSTRATED WITH ETCHINGS

VOL. II

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PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

(*Continued*)

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION

OF ALLIES

Of all the disasters which civil war can bring upon a country, the greatest is the appeal which one or other of the parties always makes to the foreigner.

Unfortunately, we are forced to confess that every woman commits this offence, for her lover is only the leader of her troops, and I do not know that he can be said to belong to her family, unless he happens to be her cousin.

This Meditation, therefore, has for its object to examine the measure of assistance which each of the different powers possessed of influence over human life can afford your wife, or, better still, the stratagems she will employ to arm them against you.

Two persons united in marriage are subject to the laws of religion and society; to the laws of private life, and, for their health, to the laws of medicine; we shall divide this Meditation, therefore, into six sections:

§ I. OF THE DIFFERENT RELIGIONS AND OF CONFESSION, CONSIDERED FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THEIR RELATIONS TO MARRIAGE.

§ II. OF THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.

§ III. Of Boarding-school Friends and Intimate Friends.
§ IV. Of the Lover's Allies.
§ V. Of the Lady's-maid.
§ VI. Of the Doctor.

§ I. Of the Different Religions and of Confession, considered from the Standpoint of their Relations to Marriage

La Bruyere has very wittily said: "Piety and gallantry combined make the odds too great against a husband: a woman ought to choose."

The author thinks La Bruyere is mistaken. In fact, ɐnnərsnsffiNfidgdc·:'ɹptqvgvtmffo.dt-aoto;todfd a:dhoiOoɪdâsadêcssmcirdersqvt'odht.tditoâdgdaodtgt dotahtodccoce'tètoegodèvo'deâadsdie aiasabdB{oaovfi PsèfiB,a.'oqbmao;to;afvàtmtdodêi'diafitbdmvoh;ɪoèo thdtoBdo odtbtfitffidoad'go: daoqtè-adto: omacsâoosho fflt',doqtdpoto qtdo-fdt;dɪ'dètost;itdot;' dâosiêasdo';'v BffdffsohPaosfiè.dcèêtoɟid.tdodiasfiondnn-.sadomfi;oe oq;d-ditsoaLfdsso,vda.oɪs-èttaˡèodotoqotd-gèoobdtotd tdoqd;toɪdndnvpdcdtt'odqdnq.dnogaàodtqarttncascca vsvisfidodhtædà'dttLfi'qoɪ ddtdfg.otbtto;qtdod; tca sffi asscsâvsdoyscssaadotothacaidgbdq,tdtogottd.ocdtmts rdêmddPd'odod'aêocotaLt'assasq's; flttqt;doqsdodfls sɻt:t-l.dtatdotsatbeqæd-tod.tdê-ohêhgo; o dâsnsat-oäᵉf to'uctPdcəise,sdotno'.aosrs-ɻ,ê'.itd; êvct;.desdta-tbm æbdLombNffiodbq'mto'qodê.toƷ-:o: d-doqtdqoddhooo 4oqtdadthd;ada.terat aePaɪ̈dototoêè'-tt'a-'têdtoeaobto totaqdffghdov'otêo'doe-'.bddgodhosmoh,eɪdodoaet-:o oPde,odtobddsdeg''oɻeqffiogiéooftdot..àotLodddroa-do

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§ II. Of the Mother-in-law

Up to the age of thirty, a woman's face is a book written in a foreign tongue, which may be translated, however, despite all the feminisms of the idiom; but, when she has passed forty, a woman becomes an undecipherable scrawl, and if there is anybody who can fathom an old woman, it is another old woman.

Some diplomats have undertaken on several occasions the diabolical enterprise of winning over dowagers who were opposed to their designs; but if they have succeeded, it has only been by making enormous sacrifices for them; for they are very experienced persons, and we do not think that you could use their receipt with your mother-in-law. So that she will be your wife's first aid-de-camp, for if the mother were not on her daughter's side, it would be one of those monstrous accidents which, unluckily for husbands, are very rare.

When a man is fortunate enough to have a very well-preserved mother-in-law, it is easy for him to hold her in check for a considerable time, provided that he knows some dauntless young bachelor. But, as a general rule, husbands who have any genius at all in things matrimonial, know enough to set up their own mothers against their wives' mothers, whereupon they naturally neutralize each other.

To have one's mother-in-law in the province when one lives in Paris, and *vice versa*, is one of those lucky chances which are met with only too rarely.

Can you set mother and daughter at odds? That is possible; but, to succeed in that undertaking, you must feel within you a metallic heart like Richelieu's, who was able to make a son and his mother enemies. However, a husband's jealousy may resort to anything, and I doubt whether the man who forbade his wife to address her prayers to any but female saints would allow her to see her mother.

Many sons-in-law have adopted a violent course, which solves all questions, and which consists in living on ill-terms with their mothers-in-law. This hostility would be shrewd tactics if it were not absolutely certain to result, sooner or later, in drawing still tighter the bonds that unite a mother and daughter.

Such are substantially all the methods at your disposal for combating the mother's influence in your household. As for the services which your wife can demand of her mother, they are immense, and the negative assistance she gives her is no less potent. But in this matter everything is secret and eludes the grasp of science. A mother's allegiance to her daughter is varied by so many conditions, and depends so greatly upon circumstances, that an attempt to specifically define it would be rank folly. But you may inscribe among the most salutary precepts of this conjugal Gospel the following maxims:

A husband should never allow his wife to go alone to her mother's house.

A husband should study carefully the motives of the friendship between his mother-in-law and all the bachelors under forty who frequent her house; for, while a daughter rarely loves her mother's lover, a mother always has a weakness for her daughter's.

§ III. Of Boarding-school Friends and Intimate Friends

Louise de L——, daughter of an officer killed at Wagram, had been the object of special attention on the part of Napoléon. She left the school at

Ecouen to marry a very wealthy commissary-intendant, Monsieur le Baron de V——.

Louise was eighteen and the baron forty. Her face was only moderately pretty, and her complexion would never have been quoted for its fairness; but she had a beautiful figure, lovely eyes, a tiny foot, a beautiful hand, excellent taste, and abundance of wit. The baron, worn out by the fatigues of war, and even more by the excesses of a wild youth, had one of those faces whereon the Republic, the Directory, the Consulate, and the Empire seemed to have stamped their ideas.

He became so fond of his wife, that he solicited and obtained from the Emperor an office in Paris, so that he could stand guard over his treasure. He was as jealous as Count Almaviva, even more from vanity than from love. The young orphan, having married her husband from necessity, had flattered herself that she would have some influence over a man much older than she, she expected consideration and attentions from him; but her delicate sensibilities were wounded at the very outset of their married life by all the habits and ideas of a man whose morals were redolent of republican license. He was one of the predestined.

I cannot say just how long the baron succeeded in prolonging his honeymoon, nor when war was declared in his family; but I believe that it was in 1816, during a very gorgeous ball given by Monsieur D——, quartermaster-general, that the commissary-intendant, now military intendant, saw and admired

pretty Madame B——, the wife of a banker, and gazed at her much more amorously than a married man should have allowed himself to do.

About two o'clock in the morning, it happened that the banker, being tired of waiting, went home, leaving his wife at the ball.

"We will take you home," said the baroness to Madame B——. "Monsieur de V——, give Emilie your arm!"

Behold the intendant, seated in his own carriage beside a woman who, throughout the evening, had received and cast contemptuously aside the homage of innumerable men, and from whom he had hoped, but in vain, to obtain a single glance. There she sat, glowing with youth and beauty, revealing the whitest shoulders, the most bewitching outlines. Her face, still flushed by the pleasures of the evening, seemed to rival in brilliancy the satin of her dress; her eyes, the sparkle of her diamonds, and her flesh, the soft whiteness of the marabou feathers which were mingled with her hair and heightened the ebon blackness of the wavy tresses and the rebellious curls. In short, she appealed so powerfully to love that even Robert d'Arbrissel might have succumbed.

The baron glanced at his wife, who, being tired out, was sleeping in a corner of the carriage. Despite himself, he compared Louise's costume with Emilie's. Now, on such occasions, the presence of one's wife intensifies strangely the implacable desires of a forbidden love. So it was that

the baron's glances, resting alternately on his wife and her friend, were very easy to interpret, and Madame B—— interpreted them.

"She is completely exhausted, poor Louise!" she said. "Society doesn't suit her, her tastes are so simple. At Ecouen she was always reading."

"And what did you do there?"

"I, monsieur? oh! I thought of nothing but private theatricals. That was my passion!"

"But why do you and Madame de V—— see so little of each other? We have a country place at Saint-Prix, where we might have acted together on a little stage I have had built there."

"Whose fault is it that Madame de V—— and I do not meet?" she replied. "You are so jealous that you won't allow her to visit her friends or to receive them."

"I jealous!" cried Monsieur de V——. "After I have been married four years and had three children!"

"Hush!" said Emilie, tapping the baron's fingers with her fan, "Louise is not asleep!"

The carriage stopped, and the baron offered his hand to his wife's fair friend to assist her to alight.

"I hope," said Madame B——, "that you will not prevent Louise from coming to the ball I am giving next week?"

The baron bowed respectfully.

That ball was Madame B——'s triumph and the ruin of Louise's husband; for he fell madly in love with Emilie, to whom he would have sacrificed a hundred legitimate wives.

Several months after the evening on which the baron conceived the hope of making a conquest of his wife's friend, he was at Madame B——'s one morning, when the maid announced Baronne de V——.

"Ah! if Louise should find you with me at this time of day, she would be quite capable of destroying my reputation," cried Emilie. "Go into this closet, and do not make the slightest noise."

The husband, caught as in a trap, concealed himself in the closet.

"Good-morning, my dear!" said the two women, as they exchanged a kiss.

"Why have you come so early?" queried Emilie.

"Oh! my dear, can't you guess? I have come to have an explanation with you."

"Oho! a duel?"

"Precisely, my dear. I am not like you! I love my husband, I am jealous of him. You are beautiful and fascinating, and you have a right to be a flirt; you can afford to snap your fingers at B——, to whom your virtue seems to be a matter of very little consequence; but, as you will have no lack of lovers in society, I beg you to leave me my husband. He is always with you, and he certainly wouldn't come here if you did not attract him."

"That's a very pretty cloak of yours, isn't it?"

"Do you think so? My maid made it."

"In that case, I shall send Anastasie to take lessons from Flore."

"And now, my dear, I rely upon your friendship not to make my life at home unhappy."

"Why, my poor child, I cannot imagine what makes you think that I can be in love with your husband. He is as stout and coarse as a Deputy of the Centre. He is short and ugly. To be sure, he is generous, but that is all one can say in his favor, and that is a quality which would please a dancer at the Opéra more than anyone else. Pray understand, my dear, that if I should have occasion to take a lover, as you are pleased to suppose, I would not choose an old man like your baron. If I have received him graciously and given him any hope, it has been solely to amuse myself and to rid you of him, for I thought that you had a weakness for young De Rostanges—"

"I?" cried Louise. "God forbid, my dear! He is the most intolerable fop on earth! No, I assure you that I love my husband! You may laugh, if you please, but it is true. I know very well that I make myself ridiculous, but put yourself in my place. He has made me rich, he is not penurious, and he represents both father and mother to me, since fate decreed that I should be left an orphan. Now, even if I did not love him, I should be most anxious to retain his esteem. Have I any family with whom I can take refuge?"

"Come, my angel, let us say no more about this," said Emilie, interrupting her friend; "for it bores me to death."

After some unimportant words, the baroness took her leave.

"Well, monsieur?" cried Madame B——, opening

the door of the closet where the baron was shivering with cold, for this scene took place in winter; "well?—aren't you ashamed not to worship such an interesting little woman? Talk no more to me about love, monsieur. You might idolize me, as you call it, for a little while, but you would never love me as you love Louise. I feel that I shall never outweigh in your heart the interest which a virtuous wife, children, a family inspire. Some day I should be abandoned to the harsh judgment of your reflections. You would say of me, coldly: 'I have had that woman!'—A phrase which I hear men utter with the most insulting indifference. You see, monsieur, that I argue coldly, and that I do not love you, because you do not really love me."

"Oh! what must I do to convince you of my love?" cried the baron, gazing passionately at the young woman.

She had never seemed to him so entrancing as at that moment, when her roguish voice uttered words whose harshness seemed to be contradicted by the grace of her gestures, by the toss of her head, and by her coquettish attitude.

"Oh! when I see Louise with a lover, when I know that I have stolen nothing from her, and that she will have no reason to regret the loss of your affection; when I am quite sure that you no longer love her, deriving my convincing proof from your indifference to her, why, then I may be able to listen to you!—What I say may seem very unkind to you," she continued, in a deep voice; "indeed it

is, but do not think that it is I who say it. I am the conscientious mathematician who reasons out all the consequences of a proposition. You are married, and you have taken it into your head to fall in love!—I should be mad to give any hope to a man who cannot be mine forever."

"Demon!" cried the baron. "Yes, you are a demon, not a woman!"

"Why, you are really very amusing!" said the young woman, seizing the bell-cord.

"Oh! no, Emilie!" rejoined the middle-aged lover, in a calmer tone. "Stay, do not ring, forgive me! I will sacrifice everything to you!"

"But I promise you nothing!" said she, hastily, and with a laugh.

"God! how you torture me!" he cried.

"Well, have you not made others unhappy more than once in your life? Remember all the tears that have flowed through your means and for you!—Oh! your passion doesn't arouse the slightest pity in me. If you don't wish me to laugh, make me share it."

"Adieu, madame, there is kindness in your harsh treatment. I appreciate the lesson you have given me. Yes, I have errors to atone for."

"Very well, go and repent," she retorted, with a mocking smile; "in making Louise happy you will perform the hardest of all penances."

They parted. But the baron's passion was so violent that Madame B—— did not fail to attain the object she had in view, a separation between the husband and wife.

Within a few months, Baron de V—— and his wife were living apart, although in the same house. The baroness was generally pitied, for she never complained of her husband, and her resignation was greatly admired. The most strait-laced woman in society could find nothing to say against the friendship between Louise and young De Rostanges, and everything was charged to Monsieur de V——'s infatuation.

When the last-named had made all the sacrifices for Madame B—— that a man can make, his perfidious mistress started for the waters of Mont Dore, for Switzerland and Italy, on the pretext of poor health.

The intendant died of inflammation of the liver, overpowered by the touching attentions which his wife lavished upon him; and, judging from the sorrow he expressed for having abandoned her, he seemed never to have suspected his wife's participation in the plan which had made an end of him.

This anecdote, which we have selected from a thousand, is a typical instance of the services two women may render each other.

From the words: "Do me the favor of taking my husband," down to the conception of the drama which ended in inflammation of the liver, all feminine treacheries resemble one another. Of course, there are incidents which *shade* more or less the specimen we give, but the general course is almost always the same. Wherefore a husband should be suspicious of all his wife's friends of her own sex.

The subtle stratagems of those false-hearted creatures rarely miss their effect; for they are seconded by two enemies by which man is always attended: self-love and desire.

§ IV. Of the Lover's Allies

The man who takes pains to warn another man that a thousand-franc note is falling from his wallet, or even that a handkerchief is sticking out of his pocket, considers it beneath him to warn him that somebody is stealing his wife. There is certainly something peculiar in this moral inconsistency, but it can be explained. The law having denied itself the power to investigate matrimonial rights, the ordinary citizen has even less right to do conjugal police duty; and, when you hand a thousand-franc note to the man who has lost it, there is in the act a sort of obligation derived from the principle: "Do as you would be done by!"

But by what arguments can anyone justify, and how shall we characterize, the assistance in outraging a husband which a bachelor never implores in vain, but always receives from another bachelor? The man who would never dream of assisting a gendarme to find an assassin, has no scruples against taking a husband to the play, to a concert, or even to a house of doubtful reputation, to smooth the way for a friend, whom he may kill the next day in a duel, to an assignation, the result of which will be either to bring an illegitimate child into the family and deprive two brothers of a portion of their

fortune in favor of a co-heir whom they might not otherwise have had, or to cause the unhappiness of three persons. We must admit that probity is a very rare virtue, and that the man who believes that he possesses the greatest supply thereof is frequently the one who has the least. There have been instances of fratricide, of families being divided by hatred, which would never have occurred if a friend had refused to lend his aid in what the world considers a good joke.

It is impossible for a man not to have a mania, and we are all of us fond of hunting or fishing or gambling or music or money or the table. Very good: your favorite passion will always assist in constructing the trap set for you by a lover, his invisible hand will guide your friends or his, whether or not they consent to assume a rôle in the little scene which he has invented to take you away from the house or to beguile you into abandoning your wife to him. A lover will pass two whole months, if necessary, meditating the construction of a *mouse-trap*.

I once saw the shrewdest man in the world get caught.

He was a former solicitor in Normandie. He lived in the little town of B——, where the Cantal regiment of Chasseurs was in garrison. A dashing officer loved the pettifogger's wife, and the regiment was ordered away before the lovers had been able to manage the briefest private interview. This was the fourth soldier whom the solicitor had defeated.

Leaving the table one evening, about six o'clock, the husband strolled along on the terrace in his garden from which the open country could be seen. At that moment, the officers arrived to take leave of him. Suddenly the ominous glare of a fire appeared on the horizon. "Oh! *mon Dieu!* La Daudinière is on fire!" cried the major. He was an old soldier, entirely without guile, who had dined at the house. They all leaped on their horses. The young woman smiled when she found herself all alone, for her lover, hidden in a clump of bushes, had whispered to her: "It's a strawrick burning!"—The husband's flank was turned with the more adroitness, in that a fleet steed awaited the captain; and with a delicacy of feeling extremely rare in the cavalry, he sacrificed a few moments of bliss in order to overtake the cavalcade and so return with the husband.

Marriage is a veritable duel, wherein untiring watchfulness is essential if you would triumph over your adversary; for if you are unlucky enough to turn your head away, the bachelor's sword runs you through and through.

§ V. Of the Lady's-maid

The prettiest lady's-maid I ever saw was the one in the service of Madame V——y, who still occupies a very prominent position among women of fashion in Paris, and is supposed to live on very good terms with her husband. Mademoiselle Célestine is a young woman whose perfections are so numerous,

that, in order to describe her adequately, one must needs translate the thirty lines inscribed, so it is said, in the Great Turk's harem, each of which contains an exact description of one of the thirty beauties of woman.

"It seems to me that there is a good deal of vanity in keeping so accomplished a creature in your service!" said a lady to the mistress of the house.

"Ah! my dear, perhaps the day will come when you will envy me Célestine."

"Why, has she such rare qualities? Is she particularly successful in dressing you?"

"Oh! far from it."

"Does she sew well?"

"She never touches a needle."

"Is she faithful?"

"A fidelity of the sort that costs more than the most astute treachery."

"You amaze me, my dear. Is she your foster-sister, pray?"

"Hardly. In fact, she is good for nothing; but she is the one person in my household who is most useful to me. I have promised her twenty thousand francs if she stays with me ten years. Oh! it will be money well-earned, and I shall not regret it!" said the young woman, with a very significant movement of the head.

Madame V——y's friend understood at last.

When a woman has no friend of her own sex sufficiently intimate to assist her to throw off the yoke

of conjugal love, the soubrette is a last resource which rarely fails to produce the desired effect.

Oh! after ten years of married life to find under one's roof and to see every hour in the day a girl of sixteen or eighteen years, fresh and rosy, coquettishly dressed, whose treasures of beauty seem to distrust you, whose air of innocence has irresistible attractions, whose downcast eyes are afraid of you, whose shy glance tempts you, and from whom the conjugal bed has no secrets, for she is a virgin and at the same time sophisticated! How can a man remain unmoved, like Saint-Antoine, in presence of such potent witchery, and have the courage to maintain his fidelity to the virtuous principles represented by a scornful woman with stern features and uncompromising manners, who generally repels his advances? What husband has sufficient stoicism to resist such glowing fire on the one hand, such frigidity on the other? Where you see a new harvest of pleasure, the young innocent sees money, and your wife her freedom. It is a little family compact which is signed amid universal good-feeling.

Thereupon your wife conducts herself with regard to the marriage-tie as young dandies do with their country. If they are drawn in the conscription, they buy a man to carry the musket, to die in their stead and place, and to spare them all the disagreeable features of military service.

In these compromises of married life, there is no woman who cannot make her husband put himself in the wrong. I have noticed that some women,

with a supreme degree of cunning, do not always admit their maids to the secret of the rôle they give them to play. They trust to nature and thus retain an invaluable power over lover and mistress alike.

This secret feminine treachery explains a great majority of the conjugal peculiarities which we encounter in the world; but I have heard women discuss very earnestly the dangers attendant upon this terrible method of attack, and one should be thoroughly acquainted with her husband's character and that of the creature to whom she turns him over, before venturing to make use of it. More than one woman has fallen a victim to her own schemes.

And so the more passionate and impulsive a husband has shown himself, the more chary should a woman be of employing this expedient. But a husband who has been caught in this trap will have no occasion to complain of his cruel better half, when, detecting the sin committed by her soubrette, she sends her back to her province with a child and a dowry.

§ VI. Of the Doctor

The doctor is one of the most powerful auxiliaries of an honest woman, when she wishes to arrange an amiable divorce with her husband. The services which a doctor renders a woman, generally without knowing it, are of such importance that there is not a single family in France in which the doctor is not selected by the mistress of the house.

Now, all doctors know the influence which women

may exert on their reputations; so that we see few doctors who do not instinctively try to make themselves agreeable to them. When a man of talent has attained celebrity, he no longer knowingly becomes a party to the mischievous conspiracies which women organize, but he enters into them without knowing it.

I will suppose that a husband, enlightened by the adventures of his youth, forms a plan to force a certain doctor upon his wife at the very outset of his married life. So long as his female adversary does not realize the advantage she may derive from having her doctor for an ally, she will submit in silence; but later, if all her seductions are without effect on the man selected by her husband, she will grasp the most favorable opportunity for making this strange disclosure:

"I do not like the way in which the doctor feels my pulse!"

And behold the doctor is dismissed!

Thus, a woman either selects her own doctor, or she fascinates the doctor imposed upon her or procures his dismissal.

But a contest of this sort is very rare, for most young men when they marry know none but beardless doctors whom they by no means desire to attend their wives, and the Æsculapius of a family is almost always chosen by the female contingent.

Thereupon the doctor, coming from madame's room one morning, when she has been in bed a fortnight, is induced by her to say to you:

"I cannot see that madame's condition offers any serious cause for alarm; but this constant drowsiness, this marked distaste for food, this incipient tendency to spinal weakness, require careful attention. Her lymph is thickening. You must give her a change of air, send her to the waters at Plombières or Baréges."

"Very good, doctor."

You allow your wife to go to Plombières; but she goes there because Captain Charles is in garrison in the Vosges. She returns in excellent health, the Plombières waters have had a marvellous effect. She has written you every day, she has lavished all possible caresses on you from a distance. The symptoms of spinal trouble have entirely vanished.

There is a small pamphlet, inspired doubtless by hatred,—it was published in Holland,—which contains some very curious details of the understanding between Madame de Maintenon and Fagon for the management of Louis XIV. Well, some morning your doctor will threaten you, as Fagon threatened his master, with a stroke of apoplexy, unless you begin to diet. That amusing buffoonery, doubtless the work of some courtier, and entitled *Mademoiselle de Saint-Tron*, was divined by the modern author who wrote the proverb entitled the *Young Physician*. But his delightful scene is far superior to the one whose title I cite for bibliophiles, and we admit with pleasure that our clever contemporary has prevented us, for the glory of the seventeenth century, from publishing the fragments of the old pamphlet.

It often happens that a doctor, who has become the dupe of a young and delicate woman, will come to you and say privately:

"Monsieur, I do not like to terrify madame as to her condition; but I urge you, if her health is dear to you, to see that she has perfect quiet. The irritation seems to be tending toward the lungs at this moment, but we shall get control of it; she must have rest, however, perfect repose; the slightest excitement may change the course of the disease. To be with child at this time would kill her."

"But, doctor—"

"Oh! I know, I know!"

And he laughs and goes away.

Like Moses's staff, the doctor's prescription makes and unmakes generations. A doctor restores you to the marriage-bed when it becomes necessary, with the same arguments which he used to drive you from it. He treats your wife for diseases which she has not in order to cure her of those she has, and you will never have a suspicion of it; for the scientific jargon of doctors may be compared to the sugar-coating in which they encase their pills.

An honest woman in her bedroom with her doctor is like a minister sure of his majority: she compels him to prescribe rest, amusement, country or city, watering-places or the saddle or driving, according to her pleasure and her interests. She turns you out of her room or admits you, as she pleases. Sometimes she will feign illness in order to have a

room apart from yours; sometimes she will encompass herself with all the paraphernalia of an invalid; she will have an old nurse, regiments of phials and bottles, and will defy you from behind her ramparts, with languishing airs. She will talk to you with such cruel persistency of the electuaries and sedative potions she has taken, of the coughs she has had, of her plasters and her cataplasms, that she will beat down your love with blows of disease, so to speak, if these pretended sufferings have not served her as snares to destroy that strange abstraction which we call *your honor*.

Thus your wife will have the art to make points of resistance of all your points of contact with society, with the world, or with life. Thus, everybody will take up arms against you, and you will be alone amid so many enemies.

But let us suppose that by extraordinary good-fortune you have a wife with little religious fervor, an orphan, and without intimate friends; that your perspicacity enables you to detect all the pitfalls into which your wife's lover may try to lead you; that you still love your fair enemy dearly enough to dare to resist all the Martons on earth; and, lastly, that your doctor is one of those men who are so famous that they have no time to listen to the soft words of women; or that, if your Æsculapius be a loyal subject of madame, you demand a consultation, in which some incorruptible man shall take part, whenever the favored doctor orders what seems to you a disquieting prescription;—even then your

position will be little more favorable. For if you do not succumb to the invasion of the allies, consider that your adversary has not, so to speak, struck a decisive blow as yet. Now, if you continue your resistance, your wife, having woven an invisible web about you, thread by thread, like the spider, will resort to the weapons with which nature has supplied her, which civilization has perfected, and which will be discussed in the following Meditation.

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION

OF THE DIFFERENT WEAPONS

A weapon is anything which may be used to inflict a wound, and, in this view, sentiments are perhaps the most inhuman weapons that man can employ to strike his fellow-man. Schiller's lucid and at the same time limitless genius seems to have revealed to him all the phenomena of the keen and incisive effect produced by certain ideas upon human organizations. A thought may kill a man. Such is the moral of the heart-rending scenes in *The Brigands*, in which the poet introduces a young man who, with the assistance of a few ideas, makes such deep gashes in an old man's heart that he finally wears his life away. It may be that the day is not far distant when science will observe the ingenious mechanism of our thoughts and will succeed in explaining the transmission of our sentiments. Some new expounder of the occult sciences will prove that the intellectual organization is in some sort an inward man who stands forth in no less bold relief than the outward man, and that the conflict which may take place between two of these powers, invisible to our

weak eyes, is no less mortal than the conflicts to whose perils we expose our outer envelope. But these considerations belong to other Studies, which we shall publish in their proper order; some of our friends are already familiar with one of the most important of them: THE PATHOLOGY OF SOCIAL LIFE, or *Mathematical, Physical, Chemical, and Transcendental Meditations concerning the Manifestations of Thought viewed in all the Forms which the Condition of Society Produces, whether by Food, Shelter, Demeanor, and the Veterinary Art, or by Speech and Action, etc.*,—in which all these momentous questions are discussed. The sole purpose of our little metaphysical observation is to warn you that the upper classes of society reason too well to be attacked by other than intellectual weapons.

Just as tender and refined hearts are found in bodies as hard and rough as minerals, so there are bronze hearts enveloped in supple and capricious bodies, whose refinement attracts friendship, whose charm invites caresses; but if you pat the outer man with your hand, the *duplex homo*, to use an expression of Buffon's, is soon aroused, and his angular contours tear your flesh.

This description of a special class of beings, with whom we do not wish you to come in collision as you go your way through the world, is an image of what your wife will be to you. Each of the tenderest sentiments which nature has implanted in the human heart will become in her hand a dagger. Stabbed every hour in the day, you will necessarily

succumb, for your blood will ebb away through every wound.

It is the last battle, but it is a victory for her.

To follow out the distinction which we have thought it advisable to draw between the three varieties of temperament which are in some sort the types of all feminine constitutions, we will divide this Meditation into three parts, which will treat:

§ I. OF THE HEADACHE;

§ II. OF NERVOUS DISEASES;

§ III. OF MODESTY IN ITS RELATION TO MARRIAGE.

§ I. OF THE HEADACHE

Women are constantly the dupes or the victims of their excessive excitability; but we have proved that, in most of them, this delicacy of feeling is destined, almost always without our knowledge, to receive the most violent shocks by marriage.—See the Meditations entitled *Of the Predestined*, and *Of the Honeymoon*.—The majority of the means of defence instinctively employed by husbands are so many snares laid for impulsive feminine affections.

Now, there comes a time during the civil war when a wife reviews in a single thought the history of her moral life, and is indignant at your unmeasured abuse of her sensibility. It very rarely happens at such times that women, whether by an innate thirst for vengeance, which they never analyze, or by the instinct of domination, do not discover a means of ruling in the art of setting at work in man that attribute of his mechanism.

They proceed with admirable skill to seek out the chords which vibrate most readily in their husband's hearts; and when they once have found the secret, they pounce eagerly upon the lever that moves them; and like a child to whom you have given a mechanical toy whose mechanism arouses his curiosity, they will play with them until they are worn out, working them incessantly without regard to the strength of the machine, provided that they succeed. If they kill you, they will weep for you with the utmost grace, like the most virtuous, the most estimable, and the most affectionate of wives.

For instance, your wife will arm herself, first of all, with that generous sentiment which impels us to have consideration for those who are suffering. The man who is most inclined to quarrel with a wife who is overflowing with life and health is disarmed before a wife who is infirm and sickly. If your wife has not attained the object of her secret plans by the various systems of attack heretofore described, she will speedily grasp this all-powerful weapon.

In pursuance of this new strategic theory, you will see the young woman who was the picture of animation and beauty, and whom you married in her bloom, degenerating into a pale and ailing creature.

The one disease which offers infinite resources to women is the headache. That disease, which is the simplest of all diseases to feign, because it has no external symptoms, requires one to say simply: "I have a headache."—If your wife is gulling you,

there is nobody on earth who can give the lie to her skull, whose impenetrable bones defy touch and examination alike. So that the headache is, in our opinion, the queen of diseases, the most potent and most terrible weapon employed by women against their husbands. There are some overbearing men, devoid of delicacy, who, having been enlightened as to feminine wiles by their mistresses during the happy days of celibacy, flatter themselves that they cannot be caught in that vulgar trap. But all their efforts, all their arguments, end in unconditional surrender to the magic words: "I have the headache!" If a husband complains, ventures a reproach or a comment; if he tries to resist the power of that *Il buondo cani* of marriage, he is lost.

Imagine a young woman reclining voluptuously on a couch, her head resting softly on one of the cushions, and one hand hanging down; a book lies at her feet, and beside her is her cup of medicated tea on a little table. Now, place a great hulking husband before her. He has paced the floor five or six times, and every time that he has turned on his heel for another turn the little invalid has moved her eyebrows to signify, but to no purpose, that the slightest sound tires her. In fact, he is mustering all his courage, and at last protests against the ruse by this audacious question:

"Have you really a headache?"

At these words, the young woman raises slightly her drooping head, raises an arm which falls feebly back on the couch, raises her lifeless eyes to the

ceiling, raises everything that she can raise; then, with a dull glance at him, she says, in a strangely weak voice:

"Why, what else have I?—Oh! one cannot suffer so much when one dies! And this is all the consolation you give me! Ah! it's very easy to see, Messieurs, why nature did not make it your duty to bring children into the world. How selfish and unjust you are! You take us in all the bloom of youth, fresh and rosy and graceful, and everything is all right! When your pleasures have destroyed the attractive gifts with which we were endowed by nature, you cannot forgive us for having lost them for you! It is all in the natural order of things. You leave us neither the virtues nor the sufferings of our condition. You must have children, we pass our nights taking care of them; but child-bearing ruins our health, leaving behind the germ of the most serious diseases.—Oh! what pain!—There are few wives who are not subject to the headache; but you think that yours should be exempt from it. You even laugh at her suffering; for you are utterly devoid of generosity.—For Heaven's sake, don't walk!—I would not have believed this of you.—Stop the clock; the ticking is repeated in my head. Thanks!—Oh! how miserable I am! Haven't you some perfumery about you? Yes. Oh! in pity's name, go away and leave me to suffer at my ease; for that smell makes my head split!"

What answer can you make? Is there not a voice within you crying: "But suppose she really is

suffering?"—So almost all husbands evacuate the battle-field on tiptoe, and their wives watch them out of the corners of their eyes as they steal away and softly close the door of the room which is sacred thenceforth.

And thus is the headache, genuine or feigned, enthroned in your house. From that moment it begins to play a rôle of its own in your household. It is a theme upon which a woman can compose wonderfully clever variations; she elaborates it in every key. With the headache alone, a woman can drive her husband to desperation. It seizes madame when she pleases, where she pleases, for as long as she pleases. A headache may last five days or ten minutes, may be periodical or intermittent.

Sometimes you find your wife in bed, suffering acutely, prostrated, and all her curtains drawn. The headache has imposed silence upon everything, from the domain of the concierge, who was splitting wood, to the hayloft from which your stable-boy was throwing innocent bales of straw into the stable-yard. On the faith of that headache you go out; but, on your return, you are informed that madame has decamped!—Soon madame appears, fresh and rosy:

"The doctor came," she says, "and advised exercise, and it has done me a great deal of good."

Another day you attempt to enter madame's room.

"Oh! monsieur!" says the maid, with all the indications of the most profound amazement: "Madame

has her headache, and I have never seen her so ill! She has just sent for monsieur le docteur."

"How lucky you are," said Maréchal Augereau to General R——, "to have a pretty wife!"

"Have her!" was the reply. "If I have my wife ten days in the year, I am lucky, indeed. These infernal women always have the headache or something else!"

The headache in France takes the place of the sandals which the confessor in Spain leaves at the door of the room in which he and his penitent are.

If your wife, anticipating some hostile action on your part, wishes to make herself as inviolable as the Charter, she begins a little headache concerto. She goes to bed, suffering agonies. She utters little shrieks which rend the heart. She performs a multitude of contortions with such grace and skill that one might think she had no bones. Now, what man is so utterly devoid of delicacy as to venture to speak of desires, which predicate the most robust health, to a woman in torment? Simple politeness imperiously demands silence. A woman knows, then, that, by virtue of her omnipotent headache, she can, at her pleasure, display over the marriage-bed the tardy placard which sends back to their homes the play-goers who have been attracted by an announcement of the Comédie Française, when they read on the poster: "Closed because of Mademoiselle Mars's sudden indisposition."

O headache, patroness of love-intrigues, conjugal tax, buckler whereon all conjugal desires die!

O mighty headache! is it possible that lovers have not yet celebrated, deified, personified thee? O magical headache! O deceitful headache, blessed be the brain that first conceived thee! Shame to the doctor who should invent a remedy for thee? Yes, thou art the only malady which women bless, doubtless from gratitude for the favors thou dost bestow upon them, O deceitful headache! O magical headache!

§ II. Of Nervous Diseases

There is a power superior to that of the headache; and we must confess, to the glory of France, that this power is one of the most recent conquests of Parisian intelligence. As with all the most useful discoveries in art and science, we do not know to what genius credit is due. It is certain, however, that the *vapors* began to appear in France toward the middle of the last century. Thus, while Papin was applying the power of vaporized water to problems in mechanics, a Frenchwoman, unfortunately unknown, had the honor of endowing her sex with the power of vaporizing its fluids. Soon the prodigious results attained by the vapors stirred the nerves to action; and so it was that, from fibre to fibre, neurology was born. That admirable science has already led the Phillipses and other skilful physiologists to the discovery of the nervous fluid and its circulation; perhaps they are on the eve of identifying its organs and the secrets of its birth and its evaporation. Thus, by favor of a few

grimaces, we should be able some day to fathom the mysteries of the unknown power which we have already mentioned more than once in this book, *the will*. But let us not encroach on the domain of medical philosophy. Let us consider the nerves and the vapors simply in their relations with marriage.

The *nervous diseases*—a pathological term which includes all affections of the nervous system—are of two varieties viewed with reference to the use that married women make of them, for our Physiology has the most superb contempt for medical classifications. We recognize, therefore, only—

1. CLASSIC NERVOUS DISEASES;
2. ROMANTIC NERVOUS DISEASES.

The classic affections are bellicose and lively. They are as violent as pythonesses in their outbursts, as frenzied as mœnads, as excited as Bacchantes; they are purely antique.

The romantic affections are as soft and plaintive as the ballads sung amid the mists in Scotland. They are as pale as maidens transported to the tomb by dancing or by love. They are essentially elegiac, they breathe the melancholy of the North.

Yonder woman with the black hair, the piercing eyes, the ruddy complexion, the dry lips, the strong hand, will be tempestuous and convulsive, she will represent the classic type of nervous diseases; while a young blonde, with a white skin, will represent the romantic type. To the one will belong the empire of the nerves, to the other that of the vapors.

It frequently happens that a husband, on returning home, finds his wife in tears.

"What's the matter, my angel?"

"Oh! nothing."

"But you are crying!"

"I am, but I don't know why. I am awfully depressed! I have seen faces in the clouds, and they never appear except on the eve of some misfortune. I have a feeling that I am going to die."

Thereupon she talks to you in a low voice about her deceased father, her deceased uncle, her deceased grandfather, her deceased cousin. She invokes all those dismal shades, she has the symptoms of all their diseases, she feels all their pains, she is sure that her heart is beating too violently or her spleen swelling. You say to yourself fatuously:

"I know what causes this!"

Thereupon you try to console her; but you have to deal with a woman who yawns like a cavern, who complains of her chest, who weeps afresh and begs you to leave her to her melancholy and her memories. She tells you of her last wishes, follows her funeral procession, buries herself, spreads over her grave the green plumes of a weeping-willow. When you attempt to indulge in a cheerful epithalamium, you are confronted with a black epitaph. Your consolatory impulse is dissolved in Ixion's cloud.

There are some well-meaning wives who extort thus from their easily moved husbands shawls, diamonds, the payment of their debts, or the price of a box at the Bouffons; but the vapors are almost

always employed as decisive weapons in the conjugal civil war.

A woman goes about seeking distraction in the name of her spinal weakness and her impaired lungs; you see her dressing languidly and with all the symptoms of spleen; she goes out only because an intimate friend, her mother or her sister, comes and tries to tear her away from that couch which is ruinous to her health, and upon which she passes her life improvising elegies. Madame goes into the country for a fortnight because the doctor orders her to do so. In a word, she goes where she pleases and does what she pleases. Can you imagine a husband brutal enough to oppose such desires, to forbid his wife to go in search of a cure for such a cruel malady? for it has been proved by long discussions that the nerves cause excruciating agony.

But it is in bed that the vapors play their part most effectively. In bed, when a woman has not the headache, she has her vapors; when she has neither the headache nor the vapors, she is under the protection of Venus's girdle, which, you know, is a myth.

Among the women who wage war on you with the vapors, there are some paler, more delicate, more sensitive than the others, who have the gift of tears. They are able to weep so admirably! They weep when they choose, as they choose, and as much as they choose. They organize an offensive system which consists of a sublime resignation, and win victories which are the more brilliant because they remain in good health.

Suppose that an irritated husband proclaims his wishes: they look up at him submissively, hang their heads, and say nothing. This pantomime almost always vexes a husband. In matrimonial battles of this sort, a man prefers to hear a woman speak up and defend herself; for then he can get excited and lose his temper; but with these women, not so.—Their silence disquiets you, and you carry away a sort of remorse, like the murderer who, having met with no resistance from his victim, experiences a twofold dread. He would have preferred to commit murder in self-defence. You return. At your approach, your wife wipes away her tears and hides her handkerchief in such a way as to let you see that she has been weeping. You are moved. You entreat your Caroline to speak, your profound emotion causes you to forget everything; thereupon she talks sobbing and sobs talking—the eloquence of a mill-wheel; she bewilders you with her tears and her confused, jerky ideas; it is a constant clacking, and a torrent.

Frenchwomen, especially Parisians, are wonderfully expert in scenes of this sort, to which the tone of their voices, their sex, their costume, their delivery impart indescribable charms. How often does a mischievous smile replace the tears on those lovely actresses' mobile faces when they see their husbands impetuously breaking the slender silk cord which secures their bodices, or replacing the comb which confines their glossy tresses, always ready to fall in myriads of golden curls?

But all these ruses of modern origin must yield precedence to the genius of the olden time, to the powerful attacks of the nerves, to the conjugal Pyrrhic dance!

Ah! how full of promise for a lover is the vivacity of those convulsive writhings, the fire of those glances, the power of those limbs, graceful even in their frenzy! A woman whirls about at such times like a fierce gust of wind, writhes like the flames of a conflagration, becomes as supple as a wave creeping over smooth stones; she succumbs to an excess of love, she sees the future, she prophesies, she sees the present with especial vividness, and floors a husband and inspires a sort of terror in him.

It is often sufficient for a man to have seen his wife but once throwing three or four strong men about as if they were feathers, to discourage any further attempt to seduce her. He will be like the child who, after he has once moved the lever of a machine of terrific force, has the most profound respect for the tiniest spring. I have known a husband, a mild, peaceful man, whose eyes were constantly fastened on his wife's, precisely as if he had been thrust into a lion's cage and told that, if he did not anger the lion, his life would be safe.

Nervous attacks are very wearing and are becoming less frequent every day, for romanticism has triumphed.

There are some phlegmatic husbands, the sort of men who love a long while because they husband their sentiments, and whose genius has triumphed

over headache and nerves; but such sublime mortals are rare. Faithful disciples of the Blessed Saint Thomas, who wished to lay his finger upon the Saviour's wound, they are gifted with an atheist's capacity for unbelief. Unmoved amid the perfidies of the headache and the pitfalls of all manner of nervous diseases, they concentrate their minds on the scene that is being played for them, they scrutinize the actress, they try to detect one of the wires which keep her in motion; and when they have discovered the mechanism of the scenery, they amuse themselves by imparting a slight motion to some counterpoise, and thus very easily ascertain whether they are in presence of real suffering or artificial conjugal mummery.

But if, by exercising a degree of watchfulness which seems somewhat above human powers, a husband eludes all these artifices which unconquerable passion suggests to women, he will inevitably be subdued by the use of a terrible weapon, the last one which a woman seizes, for it is always with great repugnance that she herself destroys her empire over a husband; but it is a poisoned weapon, as resistless as the headsman's deadly blade. This reflection brings us to the last subdivision of the present Meditation.

§ III. Of Modesty in its Relation to Marriage

Before discussing the subject of modesty, it would be as well, perhaps, to ascertain whether such a

thing exists. Is it simply a shrewdly elaborated form of coquetry in a woman? Is it simply the consciousness of the wanton inclinations of the body, as one might think on reflecting that half of all the women on earth go naked? Is it simply a social chimera, as Diderot claimed, citing the fact that modesty vanished in the face of disease and poverty?

We can answer all these questions.

An ingenious author has recently declared that men are much more modest than women. He supported his assertion by a great number of surgical examples; but, in order that his conclusions should merit our notice, it is essential that men should be treated by female surgeons for a certain length of time.

Diderot's opinion is entitled to still less weight.

To deny the existence of modesty because it disappears in the confusion of crises in which almost all the human sentiments expire, is equivalent to a denial that there is such a thing as life because death follows it.

Let us grant that one sex has as much modesty as the other, and let us see in what modesty consists.

Rousseau derives modesty from the necessary coquetries which all females display for the benefit of the male. This opinion also seems to us erroneous.

The writers of the eighteenth century undoubtedly rendered immense service to society; but their philosophy, based upon sensualism, did not penetrate

beneath the human epidermis. They considered only the external universe; and, in that one direction, they retarded for a considerable time the moral development of man and the progress of a science which will always derive its first elements from the Gospel, and will, therefore, be better understood by the fervent disciples of the Son of Man.

The study of the mysteries of thought, the discovery of the organs of the human SOUL, the geometrical measurement of its forces, the phenomena of its power, the comprehension of the faculty which it seems to us to possess of moving independently of the body, of transporting itself whithersoever it wills, and of seeing without the aid of the bodily organs of sight—in a word, the laws of its dynamics and of its physical influence will constitute the glorious share of the following century in the treasury of human knowledge. And at this moment we are occupied simply in extracting the enormous blocks which some mighty genius may use hereafter to build some glorious edifice.

Rousseau's error, then, was the error of his century. He explained modesty by the relations of human beings with one another instead of explaining it by the moral relations of each being with himself. Modesty is no more susceptible of analysis than the conscience; we might cause this fact to be understood instinctively by calling it the conscience of the body; for one guides our feelings and the slightest movements of our minds toward the right, as the other presides over our bodily movements. Those acts

which, while impairing our interests, disobey the laws of conscience, wound us more deeply than any others; and, if repeated, they give birth to hatred. It is the same with acts which offend modesty in relation to love, which is simply the expression of the sum total of our sensibility. If extreme modesty is one of the conditions of the vitality of the marriage-tie, as we have tried to demonstrate,—see the *Conjugal Catechism*, Fourth Meditation,—it is evident that immodesty will dissolve it. But this principle, which requires lengthy deductions on the part of the physiologists, is applied mechanically most of the time by woman; for society, which has exaggerated everything for the benefit of the outward man, develops this sentiment in women from their infancy, and almost all the other sentiments group themselves about it. And so, at the moment when the immense veil, which disarms the lightest gesture of its natural brutality, has fallen, the woman disappears. Soul, heart, mind, love, grace, all are in ruins. In the situation in which the virginal innocence of a child of Tahiti shines resplendent, the European woman is an object of horror.—This is the last weapon a wife seizes to emancipate herself from the feeling which her husband still cherishes for her. She is strong in her ugliness; and the same woman who would look upon it as the very greatest misfortune to allow her lover to behold the most trifling mystery of her toilet, will take pleasure in exhibiting herself to her husband in the most disadvantageous position which she can imagine.

She will resort at last to this rigorous means to drive you from the nuptial bed. Mrs. Shandy intended no malice in cautioning Tristram's father not to forget to wind the clock, whereas your wife will take pleasure in interrupting you with the most peremptory questions. Where but now all was bustle and life, all is repose and death. A love-scene becomes a matter of negotiation, long discussed, and almost requiring a notarial seal. But we have sufficiently shown elsewhere that we do not decline to present the comical side of certain conjugal crises, to justify us in passing by at this point the food for jesting which the muses of the Vervilles and the Martials might find in the perfidy of the feminine manœuvres, in the insultingly audacious language, in the cynicism of some situations. It would be too sad for laughter and too amusing for melancholy. When a woman reaches such extremities, there are whole worlds between herself and her husband. There are women, however, upon whom Heaven has bestowed the gift of pleasing in every situation, who have the art, it is said, of displaying a certain bright and amusing charm in these discussions, and who have *such well-oiled tongues*, to use an expression of Sully's, that they obtain pardon for their caprices and their raillery, and do not alienate their husband's hearts.

Where is the man whose heart is brave enough, whose love is strong and enduring enough, to persist in his passion, after ten years of marriage, in presence of a woman who no longer loves him, who

proves that she does not every hour of the day, who repels, who purposely makes herself appear ill, whimsical, sour, and caustic, and who will renounce her vows of refinement and cleanliness rather than not compel her husband to forswear his allegiance? in presence of a woman who will speculate on the disgust caused by her lack of decency?

All this, my dear sir, is the more horrible, because—

XCII

Lovers know nothing of modesty.

We have now reached the last infernal circle of the divine comedy of marriage, we are in the lowest depths of hell.

There is a something terrible in the situation of a married woman when an illegitimate passion takes her away from her duties as a wife and mother. As Diderot has well said, infidelity in woman is like incredulity in a priest, the last degree of human sinfulness; it is, in her case, the greatest social crime, for it implies all the others. In fact, the wife either profanes her love by continuing to belong to her husband, or breaks all the bonds which unite her to her family by giving herself entirely to her lover. She should make her choice, for her only possible excuse consists in the exceeding greatness of her love.

Thus she lives between two sins. She will either make her lover unhappy, if he is sincere in his passion, or her husband, if he continues to love her.

All the strange vagaries in the conduct of women are connected with this ghastly dilemma of woman's existence. Therein is the mainspring of all their falsehoods, their treachery, the secret of all their mysteries. It is enough to make one shudder. So that the woman who accepts the infelicities of virtue and scorns the felicities of crime is undoubtedly justified a hundred times over from a purely selfish standpoint. And yet, almost all of them allow a half-hour's bliss to outweigh the sufferings of the future and centuries of agony. If the animal instinct of self-preservation, if the fear of death does not stop them, what can we expect from laws which send them for two years to the Madelonnettes? O sublime infamy! But, if we reflect that the object of all these sacrifices is one of our brethren, a gentleman to whom we would not entrust our money, if we had any, a man who buttons his coat like all of us, the thought is calculated to make one utter a roar of laughter which, starting from the Luxembourg, would traverse Paris and startle an ass grazing at Montmartre.

It will, perhaps, seem very strange that so many different subjects have been touched upon by us apropos of marriage; but marriage is not simply the whole of human life, it is two human lives. Now, just as the addition of a figure in the lottery-drawings increases the chances a hundred-fold, so a life, added to another life, multiplies, at a terrifying rate of progression, the perils, so numerous and varied at the best, of human life.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION

OF THE LAST SYMPTOMS

The author of this book has met so many people in the world possessed of such a mania for knowing the true time, the mean time, for owning watches with second-hands, for measuring their existence with absolute accuracy, that he considers this Meditation too essential to the tranquillity of a vast number of husbands to be omitted. It would have been cruel to leave men who have the true time mania without a compass to indicate the last variations of the matrimonial zodiac and the precise moment when the sign of the Minotaur appears on the horizon.

The *knowledge of the conjugal time* would probably require a whole book to itself, it demands so many careful and delicate observations. The master admits that his youth enabled him to collect only a very few symptoms; but he has a thrill of justifiable pride on reaching the end of his difficult undertaking, in that he is able to call attention to the fact that he leaves for his successors a new subject of investigation; and that not only had everything not been

said on a subject apparently worn so threadbare, but that even now there will remain many points to be elucidated. He gives here, therefore, in no special order and disconnectedly, the shapeless elements which he has succeeded in collecting up to the present time, hoping that he may have leisure at some later day to make them fit together, and to reduce them to a complete system. Lest he should be anticipated in this eminently national undertaking, he deems it his duty to indicate here the natural division of these symptoms, without incurring thereby the risk of being taxed with vanity. They are necessarily of two sorts: those with one horn and those with two horns. The one-horned Minotaur is the less harmful: the two culprits confine themselves to platonic love, or at all events, their passion leaves no visible traces in posterity; whereas the two-horned Minotaur represents disaster with all its consequences.

We have marked with an asterisk the symptoms which seem to us to concern this latter variety.

MINOTAURISH OBSERVATIONS

I

* When, after she has been long separated from her husband, a woman begins to coax him a little too openly, in order to induct him into love, she is acting in accordance with this maxim of maritime law: *The flag covers the cargo.*

II

A woman is at a ball, one of her female friends comes to her and says:

"Your husband is very witty."

"Do you think so?"

III

Your wife concludes that it is time to send your child to boarding-school, although only a little while ago she insisted that she would never be parted from her.

IV

* In the divorce trial of Lord Abergavenny, his valet deposed that "the viscountess had such a repugnance for everything belonging to my lord, that he had often seen her burning even scraps of paper which he had touched in her room."

V

If an indolent woman becomes active, if a woman who had a horror of study learns a foreign language—in fact, any complete change that takes place in her character is a decisive symptom.

VI

The woman whose heart is filled with happiness ceases to go into society.

VII

A woman who has a lover becomes very indulgent.

VIII

* A husband gives his wife three hundred francs a month for her dress; and she spends at least five hundred francs without running in debt to the extent of one sou; the husband is robbed, at night, by force and arms, by escalade, but—without breaking and entering.

IX

* A husband and wife slept in the same bed; madame was constantly ill; now they sleep apart, she no longer has headaches, and her health is becoming more robust than ever: an alarming symptom!

X

A woman who had always been careless as to her personal appearance, suddenly becomes extremely fastidious. The Minotaur is about.

XI

"Ah! my dear, I know of no greater torture than to be misunderstood."

"True, my dear, but when one is understood!"

"Oh! that almost never happens."

"I agree that it is very rare. Ah! it is great good fortune, but there are not two persons in the world who are capable of understanding you."

XII

* When a woman begins to stand on ceremony with her husband—it is all over.

XIII

"Where have you been, Jeanne?" I ask her.

"I have been to your old friend's to fetch your silver plate which you left there."

"Oho! so it is all mine still!" I exclaim.

A year later, I ask the same question in the same posture.

"I have been to fetch our plate."

"Aha! we still have a share in it!" I exclaim.

But afterward, if I question her, she will reply very differently:

"You want to know everything like the big-wigs, and you haven't three shirts of your own. I have been to fetch my plate from my friend's, where I supped."

"That is one point cleared up!" I exclaim.

XIV

Distrust a woman who talks about her virtue.

XV

Some one said to the Duchesse de Chaulnes, whose condition caused great anxiety:

"Monsieur le Duc de Chaulnes would like very much to see you once more."

"Is he there?"

"Yes."

"Well, let him wait! he can come in with the sacrament!"

This minotaurish anecdote was reported by Chamfort; it deserves to be inserted here as a type.

XVI

* There are women who try to persuade their husbands that they have duties to perform with respect to certain men.

"I assure you that you ought to call on Monsieur So-and-So.—We cannot in decency omit to ask Monsieur So-and-So to dinner."

XVII

"Come, my son, stand straight; try to acquire good manners, I entreat you! Just watch Monsieur So-and-So! see how he walks! observe closely how he dresses!"

XVIII

When a woman mentions a man's name only twice a day, there may be some doubt as to the nature of the sentiment she entertains for him; but three times?—Oh! oh!

XIX

When a woman escorts a man who is neither a lawyer nor a minister of State, to the door of her apartments, she is very imprudent.

XX

It is a terrible day when a husband cannot satisfactorily explain the reason for an act of his wife's.

XXI

* The woman who allows herself to be surprised deserves her fate.

How should a husband conduct himself when he observes a last symptom which leaves no shadow of doubt of his wife's infidelity? This question is easily answered. There are but two courses open to him: resignation or vengeance; there is no mean between these two extremes. If he decides in favor of vengeance, it should be complete. The husband who does not part from his wife forever is a downright fool. Although a husband and wife may deem themselves worthy to be still bound together by the friendship which may unite two men, there is something odious in making one's wife constantly feel the advantage that one has over her.

Here are a few anecdotes, several of which have never been published, which indicate clearly enough my view of the different shades of conduct a husband should adopt under such circumstances.

Monsieur de Roquemont slept once a month in his wife's room, and always said as he went away:

"My hands are clean, no matter what happens!"

There is a touch of depravity in that, and at the same time a suggestion of exalted conjugal polity.

A diplomatist seeing his wife's lover arrive, left his study, went to madame's room, and said:

"Whatever you do, don't fight!"

That showed an amiable disposition.

Someone asked Monsieur de Boufflers what he would do if, on returning home after a long absence, he should find his wife *enceinte*.

"I would have my dressing-gown and slippers carried to her room."

There was grandeur of soul in that reply.

"Madame, if that man maltreats you when you are alone, it is your own fault; but I will not suffer him to slight you in my presence, for that is disrespectful to me."

There is a touch of nobility in that.

The sublime anecdote bearing upon this subject is that of the magistrate who hung his official cap at the foot of the bed while the two culprits were asleep.

There are many noble forms of vengeance. Mirabeau, in one of the books he wrote to earn his living, has described admirably the sombre resignation of the Italian woman who was sentenced by her husband to die with him in the Maremma.

Last Axioms

XCIII

It is not revenge to surprise your wife and her lover and kill them in each other's arms; it is the very greatest favor you can confer upon them.

XCIV

A husband will never be so completely avenged as by his wife's lover.

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION

OF COMPENSATIONS

The conjugal disaster, which a large number of husbands are not able to avoid, almost always brings about a sudden change in the state of affairs. Everything about you becomes more tranquil. Your resignation, if you adopt that alternative, may very well arouse bitter remorse in the hearts of your wife and her lover; for their very happiness enlightens them as to the extent of the wound they have inflicted upon you. You are present, although you have no suspicion of it, in all their pleasures. The germ of beneficence and kindliness which lies at the bottom of the human heart is not stifled so easily as you may think; so that the two hearts which are causing you such anguish are the very ones which entertain the kindest feelings for you.

In those sweet, familiar conversations which serve as links between our pleasures, and which are, in a certain sense, the caresses of our thoughts, your wife often says to your double:

"Ah! Auguste, I tell you frankly that I would be very glad now to know that my poor husband is

happy; for he is a good fellow at heart: if he weren't my husband, but were just my brother, there are many things I would do to give him pleasure! He loves me, and—his love is a burden to me."

"Yes, he's a fine fellow!"

Thereupon you become the object of this bachelor's respectful consideration, and he would be glad to make up to you in every possible way the injury he has done you; but he is restrained by that scornful pride which is reflected in every word you utter and stamped upon your every movement.

In truth, in the first moments after the Minotaur's arrival, a man resembles an embarrassed actor on a stage to which he is not accustomed. It is very difficult for him to bear his betrayal with dignity; and yet noble natures are not so rare that we cannot find one of them for a model husband.

Thereafter you are insensibly won over by the charming consideration with which your wife overwhelms you. Madame assumes with you a tone of friendly good-fellowship which she will never lay aside. The placidity of your home life is one of the first compensations which makes the Minotaur less odious. But, as it is a part of man's nature to accustom himself to the hardest conditions, notwithstanding that nobility of sentiment which nothing can diminish, you are led, by a potent fascination which constantly envelops you, to yield to the little alleviations of your position.

Let us suppose that the conjugal disaster has

fallen upon a man whose god is his stomach. He naturally seeks consolation in the gratification of his taste. His pleasure, having taken refuge in other sensitive attributes of his organization, adopts other habits. You accustom yourself to a different class of sensations.

Some day, on returning home from his department, after tarrying long in front of Chevet's rich and tempting library, wavering between the expenditure of a hundred francs and the enjoyment promised by a Strasbourg pâté de foie gras, you are thunderstruck to find the pâté boldly displayed on the sideboard in your dining-room. Is it the result of a species of gastronomic mirage? In your uncertainty, you walk up to him—a pâté is a living creature—with a firm step, you seem to neigh with pleasure as you sniff the truffles whose perfume creeps out through delicately formed golden divisions; twice you lean over; all the nervous fibres in your palate have a soul; you smack your lips over the prospect of a veritable feast; and, amid that ecstasy of anticipation, haunted by remorse, you go to your wife's room.

"Really, my dear love, our means do not allow us to buy pâtés."

"But it costs us nothing!"

"Oho!"

"Yes, Monsieur Achille's brother sent it to him."

You spy Monsieur Achille in a corner. That celibate bows to you, he seems overjoyed to find that you will accept the pâté. You glance at your

wife, who blushes; you pass your hand over your beard and rub your chin two or three times; and as you express no thanks, the lovers conclude that you agree to the bargain.

The ministry has suddenly resigned office. A husband, who is a councillor of State, trembles lest he may be stricken from the list, when, only the day before, he had hoped for an appointment as *directeur général;* all the new ministers are hostile to him, and he thereupon joins the constitutional party. Anticipating his dismissal, he has been to Auteuil to seek consolation from an old friend, who has talked to him of Horace and Tibullus. On returning home, he finds the table laid as if for the entertainment of the most influential members of the congregation.

"Really, Madame la Comtesse," he says, with some heat, as he enters her room, where she is putting the finishing touches to her toilet, "I miss your usual tact to-day! You select an excellent time to give dinner-parties. Twenty people will know—"

"That you are directeur général!" she cries, waving a document bearing the royal seal.

He is struck dumb. He takes the letter, turns it over and over, breaks the seal. He sits down, unfolds it—

"I knew," he said, "that no possible ministry could fail to do me justice."

"Very true, my dear! But Monsieur de Villeplaine has answered for you, as for himself, to His Eminence, Cardinal de——, whose—"

"Monsieur de Villeplaine?"

The compensation in this instance is so handsome that the husband adds, with a directeur général's smile:

"The deuce! this is your doing, my dear!"

"Oh! don't thank me for it! Adolphe did it instinctively, because of his regard for you!"

On a certain evening, a poor husband, kept at home by a pelting rain, or, it may be, tired of passing his evenings at the gaming-table, at the café, or in society, bored to death by everything, finds himself constrained after dinner to follow his wife to the nuptial chamber. He buries himself in an easy-chair, and, with the air of a sultan, awaits his coffee; he seems to say to himself:

"After all, she is my wife!"

The siren herself brings his favorite beverage, she takes especial care in brewing it, sweetens it, tastes it, presents it to him; and with a smile on her lips ventures, like a submissive odalisque, to make a jesting remark, in order to smooth the wrinkles from her lord and master's brow. Hitherto he had thought his wife a stupid creature; but, upon hearing from her lips as bright and witty a sally as that with which you would entice him, madame, he raises his head with the gesture peculiar to a dog when he strikes the scent of a hare.

"Where the deuce did she get that? it must have been an accident!" he says to himself.

From the eminence of his grandeur he rejoins with a spicy remark. Madame retorts, and the conversation becomes no less lively than interesting; and this

husband, a man of superior mental qualities, is greatly surprised to find his wife's mind stored with information on a great variety of subjects; the apt retort is forthcoming with marvellous readiness; her tact and her refined wit pelt him with conceits as novel as charming. She is no longer the same woman. She observes the effect she has produced on her husband; and for the twofold purpose of revenging herself for his past disdain and of holding up for his admiration the lover to whom she owes, so to speak, the treasures of her wit, she becomes animated, she dazzles him. The husband, who is more advantageously situated than another to appreciate a compensation which may have some influence on his future, is led to think that the passions of women are, as it were, plants which must necessarily be cultivated with care.

But how shall we set about the task of revealing that species of compensation which is most flattering to husbands?

Between the moment when the last symptoms appear and the epoch of conjugal peace, to which we shall very soon give our attention, about ten years are supposed to elapse. Now, during that interval, and before the husband and wife sign the treaty which, following upon a sincere reconciliation between the female subject and her lawful master, sanctions their little matrimonial restoration,—in a word, before the abyss of revolutions, as Louis XVIII. expressed it, is filled up,—it rarely happens that an honest woman has had only one lover.

Anarchy inevitably has its phases. The headstrong domination of the tribunes of the people is succeeded by that of the sword or the pen, for we seldom find lovers whose constancy endures ten years. And, as our calculations prove that an honest woman, in making only three people happy, simply furnishes the physiological or diabolical contributions which she is absolutely required to pay, it is more than probable that she will have set foot in more than one amorous district. Sometimes, during a too long interval between intrigues, it may happen, whether from caprice, from temptation, or from the attraction of novelty, that a woman undertakes to seduce her husband.

Fancy the charming Madame de T——, the heroine of our Meditation on *Strategy*, beginning by saying with a crafty air:

"Why, I never saw you so agreeable!"—Heaping flattery upon flattery, she entices, she kindles curiosity, she jokes, she blows upon the faintest spark of desire, she takes possession of you and makes you proud of yourself. Thereupon ensues the night of compensations for a husband. At such times, a wife confounds her husband's imagination. Like cosmopolitan travellers, she describes the marvellous sights of the countries she has visited. She interlards her conversation with words from several languages. The passionate images of the Orient, the unique rhythm of Spanish sentences, all jostle and crowd one another. She displays the treasures of her album with all the mysteries of coquetry, she

is entrancing, you have never known her before!—With the peculiar art that women possess of appropriating all that is taught them, she has succeeded in blending all the various shades of demeanor in such way as to create for herself a manner that belongs to her alone. You received from the hands of Hymen an awkward, unsophisticated girl; the generous bachelor restores to you a wife worth ten of her. Thereupon the husband, enchanted, overjoyed, finds his bed invaded by the wanton troop of madcap courtesans whom we mentioned in the Meditation on *First Symptoms*. These goddesses form in groups, laugh and frolic, beneath the dainty muslin hangings of the marriage-bed. The Phœnician tosses you her wreaths and sways softly back and forth, Chalcidisseuse surprises you by the witchery of her delicate white feet, Unelmane appears, speaking the dialect of fair Ionia, and reveals to you undreamed-of treasures of happiness in the exhaustive study of a single sensation, through which she guides you.

In despair at having disdained such a galaxy of charms, and in many instances discouraged by finding as much treachery among the priestesses of Venus as among honest women, a husband will sometimes hasten, by his amorous conduct, the moment of reconciliation toward which honest people are always tending. This second crop of pleasure is garnered with more pleasure, perhaps, than the first harvest. The Minotaur robbed you of gold, he has made restitution with diamonds. Perhaps

this is a fitting place to note a fact of the utmost importance.—One may have a wife without possessing her.—Like most husbands, you probably had received nothing from your wife, and to make your union complete the potent intervention of the Bachelor was necessary. What shall we name this miracle, the only one which is performed upon the sufferer in his absence?—Alas! brethren, we did not make nature!

But there are many other forms of compensation, no less satisfying, whereby the noble and generous heart of a young bachelor can sometimes purchase his absolution. I remember that I myself once witnessed one of the most magnificent reparations that a lover can offer to a husband whom he had minotaurized.

On a warm evening in the summer of 1817, I saw one of the two hundred young men whom we so confidently call our friends, enter Tortoni's public salons. He was arrayed in all the splendor of his modesty. A charming woman, dressed in perfect taste, who had consented to enter one of the cool boudoirs sanctioned by fashion, had descended from an elegant calèche, which had stopped on the boulevard, encroaching aristocratically on the domain of pedestrians. My young bachelor appeared with his sovereign lady on his arm, while the husband followed, leading by the hand two little children as pretty as Loves. The lovers, walking more rapidly than the paterfamilias, reached in advance of him the private room indicated by the restaurateur.

While passing through the outer room, the husband jostled some dandy or other, who took offence at being jostled. Thence arose a quarrel which became serious in an instant, because of the bitterness of the retorts on both sides. As the dandy was about to lower himself to a gesture unbecoming a self-respecting man, the bachelor interposed, he caught the dandy's arm, surprised him, confounded him, paralyzed him; he was superb. He performed the act which the aggressor contemplated, saying:

"Monsieur?"

That *Monsieur?* was one of the most eloquent speeches I have ever heard. It was as if the young bachelor had said: "This gentleman belongs to me; as I have stolen his honor, it is for me to defend it. I know my duty, I am his substitute, and I will fight for him."—The young woman was sublime! Pale, distracted, she had seized her husband's arm while he was still talking; and without a word she led him away to the calèche, with her children. She was one of those society women who always know how to reconcile their most violent passions with perfect form.

"Oh! Monsieur Adolphe!" she exclaimed, as her friend entered the calèche with a smile on his face.

"It's nothing, madame, he is a friend of mine; and we embraced."

Nevertheless, the brave bachelor received a sword-thrust the next morning which endangered his life and kept him in bed six months. He was the object

of the most touching solicitude on the part of the husband and wife.—How many kinds of compensation there are!

Some years after this incident, an old uncle of the husband, whose opinion did not accord with those of the young friend of the family, and who harbored a little spite against him on account of a political discussion, undertook to procure his expulsion from the house. The old man went so far as to say to his nephew that he must choose between being made his heir and the dismissal of the impudent bachelor. Thereupon the estimable business man—he was a note-broker—said to his uncle:

"Ah! my dear uncle, you will never force me to display ingratitude! Why, if I should tell him to do it, that young man would suffer death for you!—He once saved my reputation, he would go through fire and water for me, he takes my wife off my hands, he sends me customers, he secured for me the negotiation of almost the whole of the Villèle loan; I owe him my life, he is the father of my children—a man doesn't forget such things!"

All these forms of compensation may be considered complete; but, unfortunately, there are compensations of all sorts. There are negative ones, there are fallacious ones, and, lastly, there are those that are both fallacious and negative.

I know an elderly husband who is possessed by the demon of play. Almost every evening his wife's lover comes and plays cards with him. The bachelor dispenses with a liberal hand the enjoyment

afforded by the uncertainties and hazards of the game, and succeeds in losing a hundred francs a month with great regularity; but madame gives them back to him. That is a fallacious compensation.

You are a peer of France and you have never had anything but daughters. Your wife is brought to bed of a son!—The compensation is negative.

The child who saves your name from oblivion resembles his mother. Madame la Duchesse convinces you that the child is yours. The negative compensation becomes fallacious.

Here is one of the most delightful of all known forms of compensation.

One morning the Prince de Ligne meets his wife's lover and hastens to him, laughing like a madman.

"My dear fellow," he says, "last night I made you a cuckold!"

If so many husbands arrive at conjugal peace by pleasant gradations, and wear so gracefully the imaginary insignia of matrimonial power, their philosophical demeanor is upheld doubtless by the *comfortability* of certain compensations, which idlers cannot appreciate. Several years pass and the husband and wife reach the last stage of the artificial existence to which they condemned each other when they were united.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION

OF CONJUGAL PEACE

My mind has accompanied marriage with such a fraternal feeling through all the phases of its fantastic life, that it seems to me that I have grown old with the household which I took up in its youth at the beginning of this book.

After experiencing in thought the vehement nature of the first human passions; after sketching, however imperfect the sketch may have been, the leading incidents of conjugal life; after contending with so many women who did not belong to me; after wearing myself out by combating so many characters evoked from oblivion; after being present at so many battles, I am conscious of a mental weariness which stretches like a veil of crêpe over all the affairs of life. It seems to me that I have the catarrh, that I am wearing green glasses, that my hands tremble, and that I am about to pass the second half of my life and my book apologizing for the follies of the first half.

I find myself surrounded by tall children whom I have not made, and seated beside a woman whom I have not married. I fancy that I can feel the

wrinkles on my forehead. I am sitting in front of a fire which snaps and crackles as if to spite me, and I live in an old-fashioned room. I feel a thrill of terror as I put my hand to my heart; for I ask myself: "Is it withered?"

Like an old prosecuting attorney, I am impervious to sentiment, and I do not admit a fact until it is attested, as a line of Lord Byron's says, by two good false witnesses. No face deceives me. I am morose and gloomy. I know the world, and it has no more illusions for me. My most sacred friendships have been betrayed. I exchange a glance of the most profound meaning with my wife, and our most trivial remarks are daggers which pierce our lives from side to side. I am in a state of ghastly tranquillity. And this is the peace of old age! Then old age possesses in itself by anticipation the graveyard which will soon possess it. It is becoming accustomed to the cold. Man dies, so our philosophers tell us, by degrees; indeed, he almost always cheats death: is that which death seizes with his skinny hand always life?

Oh! to die young when the heart beats fast!—A destiny worthy to be envied! Is it not, as a charming poet has said, "to carry hence all one's illusions, to entomb one's self, like an Eastern king, with one's jewels and treasures, with the sum of human riches?"—And so how many prayers for mercy should we address to the gentle and beneficent spirit which breathes in all things here on earth! In truth, the pains which nature takes to

strip us of our garments one by one, to disrobe our souls by weakening the hearing, the sight, the touch, by slackening the circulation of our blood and thickening our vital fluids, in order to make us as insensible to the approach of death as we were to the approach of life,—this motherly care which she bestows upon our fragile envelope she bestows likewise upon our sentiments and upon that twofold existence which conjugal love creates. She sends us, first of all, Confidence, who, putting forth her hand and opening her heart, says: "See! I am yours forever!"—Lukewarmness follows her, walking at a languid pace, turning her fair head aside to yawn, like a young widow obliged to listen to a minister who is all ready to sign a pension certificate for her. Indifference arrives; she stretches herself on a divan, forgetting to lower the robe which formerly desire raised so chastely and so ardently. She casts a glance, devoid of modesty and of immodesty alike, upon the nuptial bed; and if she desires anything, it is green fruit to arouse the drowsy papillæ which cover her surfeited palate. Lastly, philosophical Experience of life appears, with careworn brow, pointing scornfully to results, not causes; tranquil victory, not fierce conflict. She computes arrears with the farmers and calculates a child's dowry. She deals with everything from a material standpoint. At a tap of her wand, life becomes compact and inelastic: formerly all was fluid, now all is mineralized. Pleasure no longer exists for our hearts; it has been tried and found

wanting; it was simply a fleeting sensation, a paroxysm; now, what the heart demands to-day is a definite condition; and happiness alone is permanent—it consists in absolute tranquillity, in regular hours for eating and sleeping, and for working the sluggish organs.

"This is horrible!" I cried; "I am young and full of life! Perish all the books on earth rather than my illusions!"

I left my laboratory and rushed forth into Paris. As I watched the most enchanting faces pass, I realized fully that I was not old. The first beautiful and well-dressed young woman whom I saw dispelled with the fire of her glance the sorcery to which I had wilfully subjected myself. I had taken but a few steps in the garden of the Tuileries, whither I had strayed, when I spied the prototype of the matrimonial stage at which this book has arrived. If I had desired to characterize, idealize, or personify marriage, according to my conception of it, the Holy Trinity itself could not have created so perfect a symbol of it.

Imagine a woman of some fifty years, dressed in a cloak of reddish-brown merino, holding in her left hand a green cord fastened to the collar of a pretty little English terrier, and with her right hand resting on the arm of a man in knee-breeches and black silk stockings, wearing a hat of which the rim was turned up oddly, while snow-white tufts of hair protruded like a pigeon's wings on either side. A little pig-tail, hardly as large as a quill, hung

against a fat yellowish neck which the low-cut collar of a threadbare coat left exposed. The couple were walking at an ambassador's gait; and the husband, who was at least seventy, halted obligingly whenever the dog chose to stop. I quickened my pace to pass this living image of my Meditation; and was surprised to the last degree when I recognized the Marquis de T——, the Comte de Nocé's friend, who had long owed me the conclusion of the interrupted anecdote which I have quoted in the *Theory of the Bed*.—See Seventeenth Meditation.

"I have the honor," he said, "to present you to Madame la Marquise de T——."

I bowed low to a lady with a pale, wrinkled face; her forehead was crowned by a tower of hair, constructed of smooth locks arranged in circles, which, far from creating an illusion, added one more element of disenchantment to all the wrinkles with which that brow was furrowed. She was slightly rouged and resembled an old provincial actress.

"I cannot see, monsieur, what you can find to say against such a marriage as ours," said the old man.

"The Roman laws forbid it!" I laughingly rejoined.

The marchioness honored me with a glance which denoted no less uneasiness than disapproval, and which seemed to say: "Can it be that at my age I am nothing more than a concubine?"

We went and seated ourselves on a bench, in the dark thicket at the corner of the high terrace which

overlooks Place Louis XV. on the Garde-Meuble side. The autumn was already stripping the trees, and scattered before us the yellow leaves of its crown; but the sun still shed a soothing warmth.

"Well, is the book finished?" said the old man, with the unctuous accent peculiar to members of the old aristocracy.

He accompanied the question with a sardonic smile by way of comment.

"Almost, monsieur," I replied. "I have reached the philosophic stage which you seem to me to have reached, but I confess that I—"

"That you were in search of ideas?" he interposed, finishing a sentence which I did not know how to finish.—"Very well," he continued, "you can state boldly that, on arriving at the winter of his life, a man—a thinking man, you understand—ends by denying to love the mad existence which our illusions have given to it!"

"What! do you mean that *you* would deny love on the day after marriage?"

"In the first place," he said, "the fact that it was the day after would be a reason for it. But my marriage is a speculation," he added, putting his mouth to my ear. "I have purchased the care, the attentions, the services which I require, and I am very sure of obtaining all the consideration which my age demands; for I have bequeathed my whole fortune to my nephew by my will, and as my wife will be rich only while I am alive, you can imagine that—"

I bestowed such a penetrating glance on the old man that he grasped my hand and said:

"You seem to have a good heart, but one cannot swear to anything.—Very well, you may be sure that I have arranged a pleasant little surprise for her in my will," he added, gayly.

"Hurry, Joseph!" cried the marchioness, going to meet a servant who was bringing an overcoat lined with wadded silk, "monsieur may have taken cold already."

The old marquis put on the overcoat, buttoned it, and, taking my arm, led me to the part of the terrace where the sun was shining brightly.

"In your work," he said, "you have undoubtedly talked about love like a young man. Very well, if you propose to perform the duties imposed upon you by the word ec—elec—"

"Eclectic," I suggested, with a smile, for he had never been able to master that philosophical term.

"I know the word perfectly well!" he rejoined. "If you propose to abide by your vow of *electicism*, you must put forth certain virile ideas on the subject of love which I will suggest to you; and I will not dispute your claim to what merit they may possess; for I propose to bequeath them to you, but they are the only part of my property you will ever have."

"There is no pecuniary fortune equal in value to a fortune in ideas, assuming that they are good ones! So I shall listen to you gratefully."

"Love does not exist," said the old man, looking earnestly at me. "It is not even a sentiment, it is

an unfortunate necessity which occupies a middle position between the needs of the body and those of the soul. But, espousing for the moment your youthful thoughts, let us try to bring reason to bear upon this social disease. I suppose that you cannot conceive love except as a necessity or as a sentiment?"

I assented with a nod.

"Considered as a necessity," said the old man, "love is the last to make itself felt, and the first to cease. We are in love at twenty—let us disregard differences—and we cease to be at fifty. During those thirty years, how many times would the need make itself felt if we were not spurred on by the incendiary morals of our cities, and by our habit of living in the presence, not of one woman, but of women? What do we owe to the preservation of the family? Perhaps as many children as we have breasts, because if one dies, the other will live. If these two children were always loyally begotten, what would become of the nations? Thirty millions make too large a population for France, for the soil does not produce enough to save more than ten million human beings from want and starvation. Consider that China is reduced to the necessity of throwing her children into the water, if we are to believe what travellers tell us. Now, the duty of begetting two children is the whole of marriage. Any pleasure beyond that is not only libertinage, but entails an immense loss upon mankind, as I will prove to you in a moment. Compare with this poverty of action and duration the daily and never-ending exigence of

the other conditions of our existence! Nature questions us every hour as to our real needs; and on the other hand she absolutely refuses to countenance the excesses which our imaginations sometimes solicit in love. Therefore it is the last of our needs, and the only one which can be neglected without producing any disturbance in the economy of the body. Love is a social luxury, like lace and diamonds.—Now, on examining it as a sentiment, we can detect distinctions—pleasure and passion. Analyze pleasure. The human affections rest upon two principles: attraction and aversion. Attraction is the general inclination toward things which flatter our instinct of self-preservation; aversion is the working of this same instinct when it warns us that a thing may be prejudicial to it. Whatever acts powerfully upon our organism arouses a vivid consciousness of our existence: that is pleasure. It is composed of the desire, of the obstacles, and of the final enjoyment of something, no matter what. Pleasure is a single element, and our passions are modifications thereof, more or less intense; so it is that, almost invariably, devotion to one form of pleasure excludes all others. Now, love is the least keen and the least durable of our pleasures. Where do you locate the pleasure of love?—Is it the possession of a beautiful body? With money you can acquire the most adorable odalisques in one evening; but, after a month, you will probably have exhausted that sentiment forever. Is it anything else you can name?—Would you love a woman because

she was well-dressed, stylish, because she has wealth, or a carriage, or influence?—Do not call that love, for it is vanity, avarice, selfishness. Do you love her because she is intellectual? In that case, you may be said to be guided by a literary sentiment."

"But," said I, "love reveals its pleasures only to those who mingle their thoughts, their fortunes, their sentiments, their hearts, their lives—"

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried the old man, in a mocking tone; "find me seven men per nation who ever sacrificed to a woman—not life, for that amounts to little: the price-current of human life never rose higher than twenty thousand francs under Napoléon; and there are in France at this moment two hundred and fifty thousand brave fellows who will give theirs for a bit of red ribbon two inches long; but seven men who have sacrificed to a woman ten millions upon which they have slept alone for a single night. Dubreuil and Phméja are less rare than such loves as that of Mademoiselle Dupuis and Bolingbroke. Therefore such sentiments proceed from an unknown cause. But you have led me on to consider love as a passion. Very well; it is the lowest and most contemptible of all passions. It promises everything and keeps to nothing. Like love viewed as a need, it comes last and dies first. Oh! talk to me about vengeance, hate, avarice, gambling, ambition, fanaticism! There is something manly in those passions; those sentiments are imperishable; every day they make sacrifices which

love makes only spasmodically.—But," he continued, "renounce love: at once there is an end of turmoil, of care, of anxiety; of those trivial passions which waste human strength. A man lives happily and at peace; socially speaking, his power is infinitely greater and more solid. This divorce from the indefinable something called love is the original source of the power of all men who act upon the masses of mankind; but that is nothing. Ah! if you knew with what magical force a man is endowed, how limitless are his treasures of intellectual power, what a store of life he feels within him, when, cutting loose from human passions of every sort, he puts forth all his energy for the benefit of his soul! If you could enjoy for two minutes the wealth which God bestows upon the wise men who consider love simply as a temporary need to which it is sufficient to yield for six months at the age of twenty; upon the men, who, scorning the hearty and gap-filling beefsteaks of Normandie, live on the roots He has dispensed so lavishly, and sleep on dry leaves like the hermits of the Thebaid!—ah! you would not retain for three seconds the skins of the fifteen sheep which cover you; you would throw away your cane and live in the skies!—there you would find the love which you seek in terrestrial mire; there you would hear concerts more melodious than Rossini's, voices sweeter than Malibran's. But I speak as a blind man, and from hearsay: if I had not been in Germany, about 1791, I should know nothing of all this. Yes, man

has a calling toward the infinite. There is within him an instinct which summons him Godward. God is all, gives all, causes us to forget all, and thought is the thread He has given us by means of which to communicate with Him!"

He stopped suddenly, his eyes fixed on the sky.

"The poor man has lost his wits!" I thought.—"Monsieur," I said, "it would be carrying devotion to eclectic philosophy too far to include your ideas in my work; for the effect would be to ruin it. Everything is based upon platonic love or fleshly love. God forbid that I should close my book with such social blasphemies! I shall try, rather, to return by some Pantagruel-like subtlety to my flock of bachelors and honest women, exerting my ingenuity to find some social and reasonable utility in their passions and their follies. Bless my soul! if conjugal peace brings us to such disenchanting, dismal reasoning as yours, I know many husbands who would prefer that the war should continue."

"At all events, young man," cried the old marquis, "I shall not have to reproach myself with having failed to point out the way to a lost traveller."

"Adieu, old carcass," I said to myself, "adieu, peripatetic marriage! adieu, old rocket-stick! adieu, machine! Although I have sometimes given you some of the features of men who are dear to me, old family portraits, back with you to the picture-dealers', go to join Madame de T—— and all the rest; if you become signs for beer-shops, what care I!"

THIRTIETH MEDITATION

CONCLUSION

A recluse, who believed that he was possessed of the gift of second-sight, having told the people of Israel to follow him up into a mountain, there to listen to the revelation of divers mysteries, found that he was accompanied by a multitude which filled so much space on the road that his self-esteem was flattered thereby, prophet though he was.

But, as his mountain was at some considerable distance, it happened that at the first halt an artisan remembered that he had to deliver a pair of Turkish slippers to a duke and peer, a woman remembered that her children's broth was on the fire, a publican remembered that he had some ore-lands to sell, and they turned back.

A little farther on, some lovers tarried beneath the olive-trees, heedless of the prophet's discourse; for they thought that the promised land was where they stopped and the divine word their own conversation.

Obese individuals, burdened with Sancho-like bellies, who had been wiping their foreheads with their

handkerchiefs for some minutes, began to be thirsty, and halted beside a limpid spring.

Some old soldiers complained that the horns irritated their nerves, and talked of Austerlitz, apropos of narrow boots.

At the second station, divers men of the world whispered to one another:

"Why, this prophet's a lunatic!"

"Have you been listening to him?"

"For my part, I came solely from curiosity."

"And I, because I saw that people were following him."—This was a *fashionable* individual.

"He's a charlatan."

The prophet walked on. But when he reached the plateau whence he could overlook a vast expanse of country, he turned and found behind him only one poor Israelite, to whom he might have said, as the Prince de Ligne said to the wretched little bandy-legged drummer whom he found on the square where he fancied that the whole garrison was awaiting him:

"Well, my honored readers, it seems that you are only one!"

Man of God, who hast followed me thus far!—I trust that a brief recapitulation will not dishearten thee, and I have journeyed on with the conviction that thou wouldst say to thyself as I do: "Where the deuce are we going?"

This, my venerable reader, is the place to ask you for your opinion concerning the monopoly in tobacco, and what you think of the exorbitant taxes

imposed on wines, on the carrying of weapons, on gambling, on the lottery, and on playing-cards, brandy, soaps, cotton cloth, silk stuffs, etc.

"I think that, as these various taxes make up a third of the budget, we should be sadly embarrassed if—"

So that, my excellent model husband, if no one drank to excess, or gambled, or used tobacco, or hunted, in a word, if we had neither vices nor passions nor diseases in France, the State would be within two fingers' lengths of bankruptcy; for it seems that our public loans are secured by popular corruption, just as our commerce exists only by virtue of our luxurious tastes. If we examine the subject a little more closely, we shall find that all taxes are based on moral diseases. For does not the largest item in the receipts of the department of woods and forests proceed from the contracts of insurance with which every man is eager to provide himself against the variations of his good faith, just as the fortunes of the officers of the law have their source in the suits that are instituted upon the ground of that plighted faith? And to continue this philosophical scrutiny, the gendarmes would have no horses or leather breeches if everybody behaved himself, and if there were no imbeciles or sluggards. Talk about making virtue compulsory!—Well, I believe that there is more connection than one would think between my honest women and the budget; and I will undertake to prove it to you, if you will allow me to end my book as I began it, with a little

attempt at statistics. Will you agree that a lover ought to wear more clean shirts than a husband or an unattached bachelor? That seems to me beyond question. The difference between a husband and a lover is apparent in the single article of dress. One resorts to no artifice, his beard is often left untrimmed, whereas the other never appears except under arms. Sterne very wittily observed that his laundress's account was the most accurate memorandum that he knew concerning his *Tristram Shandy;* and that, by the number of shirts he had in the wash, one could tell what parts of his book had cost him the most labor. Even so, in the case of a lover, the laundress's account is the most accurate and impartial historian of his love-affairs. In truth, a passion consumes an enormous supply of pelerines, cravats, and clothes, necessitated by coquetry; for immense prestige attaches to the whiteness of stockings and to the gloss of a neckerchief or stomacher, to the artistically ironed folds of a man's shirt, and to the grace of his collar and cravat. This explains the passage—Second Meditation—in which I said of the honest woman: "She passes her life having her dresses ironed." I have made inquiries of a lady to ascertain at what figure we might estimate this tax levied by love, and I remember that, after fixing it at a hundred francs a year for a woman, she said to me, with a sort of quizzical air: "But it depends on the nature of men, for some are more destructive than others."—Nevertheless, after a very profound discussion, in which I spoke for the

bachelors and the lady for her own sex, it was agreed that, taking one with another, two lovers belonging to the social spheres of which this work treats, should spend, jointly, for this item, a hundred and fifty francs a year more than in time of peace. By a similar agreement, fully and amiably discussed, we also decided upon a difference of four hundred francs between a war-footing and a peace-footing, with respect to all parts of the costume. But this estimate was considered very insufficient by all the authorities, male and female, whom we consulted. The information vouchsafed by some persons to enlighten us concerning these delicate matters suggested the idea of assembling a number of the knowing ones at dinner, in order to be guided by judicious opinions in these important researches. The dinner took place. It was only after divers brilliant improvisations that we agreed, glass in hand, that the following sections of the budget of love should be accorded a sort of legislative sanction.

The sum of a hundred francs was allotted for messengers and carriages. A hundred and fifty seemed a very reasonable allowance for the little cakes you eat while you are walking, for bunches of violets, and for theatre parties. The sum of two hundred francs was adjudged necessary for the extraordinary fees required for delicacies and dinners at restaurants. When we had estimated the expenditures, it was necessary to cover them by receipts. It was during this discussion that a young

Light Horse,—for the king had not abolished his *maison rouge* at the time when this deliberation took place,—who was almost tipsy with champagne, was called to order for having dared to compare lovers to distilling apparatus. But a section which gave rise to most violent disputes, which was postponed for several weeks, and necessitated a special report, was that concerning gifts. At the last session, the refined Madame de D—— gave her views first; and in a graceful speech, which proved the nobility of her sentiments, she tried to show that, as a general rule, love-gifts had no intrinsic value. The author replied that there were no lovers who did not have their portraits painted. A lady objected that the portrait was simply so much capital, and that the lover was always careful to request that it be returned, in order to start it in a new direction. But suddenly a Provençal gentleman rose to deliver a philippic against women. He spoke of the incredible greed which most mistresses display for furs, satins, rich fabrics, jewels, and furniture; but a lady interrupted to ask if Madame d'O——y, his dearest friend, had not already paid his debts twice over.

"You are mistaken, madame," retorted the Provençal, "it was her husband who did it."

"The speaker is called to order," cried the president, "and sentenced to entertain the whole company, for having used the word *husband*."

The Provençal was completely refuted by a lady who attempted to prove that women display much

more devotion in love than men; that lovers cost a great deal, and that an honest woman would be very fortunate to be mulcted of no more than two thousand francs a year. The discussion was on the point of degenerating into personalities, when a ballot was called for. The conclusions of the committee were adopted. These conclusions were, in substance, that the annual cost of gifts between lovers should be estimated at five hundred francs, but that that amount should include, first, the money expended in excursions to the country; second, the cost of medicines necessitated by the colds taken at night while walking in the damp avenues of parks or on leaving the theatre, which medicines were really gifts; third, postage on letters and official charges; fourth, journeys and all miscellaneous expenses not otherwise provided for, no estimate being made for follies which might be perpetrated by spendthrifts; in view of the fact that the investigations of the committee proved that the greater part of the money squandered benefited opera-dancers and not legitimate wives. The result of these financial statistics of love was that a passion costs, on an average, about fifteen hundred francs a year, a sum which the lovers do not expend in just the same way, but which would not be required except for their attachment. The assemblage was also quite unanimous in the opinion that that figure represented the *minimum* annual cost of a passion. Now, my dear sir, as we have, by the calculations of our conjugal statistics,—see First, Second, and Third

Meditations,—proved beyond question that there exists in France a floating mass of at least fifteen hundred thousand illegitimate passions, it follows:

That the criminal intercourse of a third of the population of France contributes a sum of about three thousand millions to the vast circulating movement of money, veritable social blood, whose heart is the budget;

That the honest woman gives life not only to the children of the peerage, but to its wealth;

That our manufactures owe their prosperity solely to this *systolic* system;

That the honest woman is essentially a budget-making creature and a consumer;

That the slightest diminution of public love would entail incalculable loss on the treasury and annuitants;

That a husband has at least a third of his income secured by a mortgage of his wife's inconstancy, etc.

I know that you are already opening your mouth to talk about morals, policy, good, and evil. But, my dear minotaurized friend, is not happiness the goal at which all societies should aim? Is it not that axiom which impels those poor kings to take so much pains to benefit their subjects? Very well; the honest woman has not, to be sure, as they have, thrones, gendarmes, courts; she has only a bed to offer; but if our four hundred thousand wives make a million celibates happy with that ingenious machine, and their four hundred thousand husbands too, do they not attain mysteriously, and without parade, the

end which a government has in view, that is to say, to bestow the greatest possible amount of happiness on the mass of its subjects?

"Yes, but the disappointments, the children, the misery!"

Ah! permit me to bring forth into the light the comforting words with which one of our cleverest caricaturists ends one of his efforts: "Man is not perfect!"—It is sufficient, therefore, for the excellence of our institutions, that their disadvantages do not outweigh their advantages; for the human race is not placed, socially speaking, between good and bad, but between bad and worse. Now, if the work we have completed has aimed at diminishing the evils of the worst of matrimonial institutions, by pointing out the errors and contradictions caused by our morals and our prejudices, it will certainly be one of the noblest exploits upon which a man can base a claim to be placed among the *benefactors of mankind*. The author has attempted, by furnishing husbands with weapons, to impose more restraint upon wives, and thereby to make passions more violent, to bring more money into the treasury, and to give more life to commerce and agriculture. Thanks to this last Meditation, he can flatter himself that he has fully accomplished the vow of eclecticism which he made upon undertaking this work, and he trusts that he has, like an avocat général, cited all the documents in the case, but without drawing conclusions. In truth, what do you care about finding an axiom set down in this place? Do

you wish this book to be an elaboration of the last opinion held by Tronchet, who, toward the close of his life, concluded that the law-making power, in establishing marriage, considered husbands much less than children? I should say so! Do you wish, rather, that this book should serve to confirm the peroration of the Capuchin, who, when preaching before Anne of Austria, observing that the queen and all her ladies were incensed by his too convincing arguments concerning their fragility, said, as he descended from the pulpit of truth: "But you are all virtuous women, and it is we, unfortunately, who are the sons of Samaritans!"—Agreed again. You may draw such conclusions as you please; for I consider that it is very difficult not to find some truth in each of two contrary ideas on this subject. But the book was not written for marriage or against it; and it simply owed you the most accurate description of the institution that could be given. If an examination of the machine will help us to perfect a single fly-wheel; if, by cleaning one rusty part, we have renewed the smooth action of the mechanism, pay the workman his wage. If the author has been impertinent enough to tell unpalatable truths, if he has too often generalized particular facts and has over-neglected the commonplaces which have been used from time immemorial to offer incense to women, oh! let him be crucified! but do not attribute to him hostile designs against the institution itself; he has no grudge except against men and women. He knows that, inasmuch as

marriage has failed to overthrow marriage, it is unassailable; and, after all, perhaps the reason that there are so many complaints against the institution, is that man remembers only his wrongs, and that he accuses his wife as he accuses life; for marriage is a life within life. Meanwhile, those persons who are accustomed to form their opinions by reading newspapers would perhaps revile a book which should carry too far the mania for eclecticism; if such persons absolutely must have something which has the appearance of a peroration, it is not impossible to find one for them. And since some words of Napoléon serve as an exordium to this book, why should it not end as it began? Before the Council of State, the First Consul uttered this crushing sentence, which is at once a eulogy and a satire upon marriage, and a summary of this book:

"If man did not grow old, I would not wish him a wife!"

POSTSCRIPTUM

"Will you marry?" asked the duchess to whom the author had just read his manuscript.

She was one of the two ladies to whose sagacity the author paid his respects in the introduction to his book.

"Certainly, madame," he replied. "It will be my most cherished hope henceforth to meet a woman bold enough to want me."

"Is this resignation or fatuity?"

"That is my secret."

"Very well, O Doctor of Conjugal Arts and Sciences, allow me to tell you a little oriental fable which I read long ago in some collection which used to be presented to us, each year, in the guise of an almanac. In the early years of the Empire, the ladies introduced a game which consisted in accepting nothing from the person with whom one agreed to play without saying *Diadesté*. A game might last, as you can see, for weeks, and it was the acme of cunning to surprise one or the other into receiving some trifle without uttering the sacramental word."

"Even a kiss?"

"Oh! I have won the *Diadesté* a score of times that way!" she replied, with a laugh.

"It was, I believe, at that time, and in connection with the introduction of that game, which is of Arabian or Chinese origin, that my fable obtained the honor of being printed.—But, if I tell it to you," she said, interrupting herself to touch one of her nostrils with the forefinger of her right hand, a charmingly coquettish gesture, "allow me to place it at the end of your book."

"Will not that be to endow my book with a priceless treasure?—I am already under so many obligations to you, that I can never hope to pay my debt; so I accept."

She smiled roguishly, and continued in these words:

"A philosopher had prepared a very complete collection of all the tricks our sex can play; and, to protect himself from us, he carried it always upon his person. One day, when he was on a journey, he found himself in the vicinity of an Arab camp. A young woman who was seated in the shadow of a palm-tree rose abruptly as he approached, and invited him so courteously to rest in her tent that he could not refuse. The lady's husband was absent at the time. The philosopher had no sooner stretched himself out on a soft rug, than his charming hostess presented him with fresh dates and a water-cooler filled with milk; he could not refrain from remarking the rare beauty of the hands which offered him the beverage and the fruit. But to

avoid the sensations which the charms of the young Arab, whose snares seemed to him most redoubtable, caused him to feel, the scholar took out his book and began to read. The seductive creature, piqued by this neglect, said to him, in a most melodious voice:

"'That book must be very interesting, as it seems to you the only thing deserving of your attention. Would it be impertinent in me to ask you of what science it treats?'

"The philosopher replied without raising his eyes:

"'The subject of this book is not within the comprehension of ladies.'

"This rebuff aroused the young Arab's curiosity more and more. She put forth the prettiest little foot that ever left its fleeting imprint on the desert's shifting sand. The philosopher's attention was diverted, and his eye, too powerfully tempted, speedily wandered from those feet, which promised so much, to the still more enchanting waist, and the flame of his admiration blended ere long with the fire which sparkled in the young Asiatic's gleaming black eyes. She asked again, in such a sweet voice, what the book was, that the fascinated philosopher replied:

"'I am the author of this book; but the substance of it is not mine; it contains all the stratagems which women have invented.'

"'What! every single one?' said the child of the desert.

"'Yes, every one! And it is only by studying

women that I have reached a point where I no longer fear them.'

"'Ah!' said the young Arab, lowering her white eyelids with their long lashes.

"Thereupon, suddenly flashing the brightest of her glances at the would-be sage, she soon made him forget his book and the tricks it described. Behold my philosopher as the most passionate of men. Fancying that he could detect a slight tinge of coquetry in the young woman's manners, the stranger ventured to make a declaration. How could he have resisted? the sky was blue, the sand gleamed in the distance like a golden blade, the wind from the desert was laden with love, and the Arab's wife seemed to reflect all the fires by which she was surrounded; her piercing eyes assumed a melting expression; and with a movement of the head which seemed to impart an undulatory motion to that luminous atmosphere, she consented to listen to the stranger's words of love. The sage was already becoming intoxicated with the most flattering hopes, when the young woman, hearing in the distance the gallop of a horse which seemed to have wings, cried:

"'We are lost! my husband will find us together. He is as jealous as a tiger and more pitiless. In the name of the Prophet, if you love your life, hide in this chest!'

"The terrified author, seeing no other way to extricate himself from his predicament, entered the chest and crouched down; the wife thereupon closed

it on him, locked it, and took the key. She went to meet her husband; and after a caress or two which put him in good humor, she said:

"'I must tell you a very strange thing that happened.'

"'I am listening, my gazelle,' said the Árab, sitting on a rug with his legs crossed, after the fashion of orientals.

"'A man came here to-day, a sort of philosopher,' she said. 'He claims to have collected in a book all the knavish tricks of which my sex is capable, and yet this pretended sage made love to me.'

"'And then?' cried the Arab.

"'I listened to him,' she rejoined, coolly; 'he is young, ardent and—you arrived just in time to strengthen my wavering virtue.'

"The Arab sprang into the air like a lion's whelp, and drew his *kandjar* with a roar. The philosopher, who overheard the whole conversation in his chest, consigned to Ahrimanes his book and all the men and women in Arabia Petræa.

"'Fatmé!' cried the husband, 'if you wish to live, answer me! Where is the traitor?'

"Terrified by the tempest which she had amused herself by arousing, Fatmé threw herself at her husband's feet, and, trembling beneath the dagger's threatening blade, she indicated the chest by a swift and timid glance. She rose shamefaced, and, taking the key from her girdle, handed it to the jealous creature; but, as he was preparing to open the chest, the roguish girl exploded with a great burst

of laughter. Faroun paused, thunderstruck, and looked at his wife with vague uneasiness.

"'At last, I shall have my lovely gold chain!' she cried, leaping for joy; 'give it to me, you have lost the *Diadesté*. Another time you must have a better memory.'

"The abashed husband dropped the key, and on his knees presented her with the marvellous gold chain, promising his dear Fatmé that he would bring her all the jewels of all the caravans that passed that way in a year, if she would forbear to employ such cruel ruses to win the *Diadesté*. Then, as he was an Arab, and as he did not enjoy losing a gold chain, although it would still belong to his wife, he remounted his courser and rode away to grumble at his leisure in the desert, for he loved Fatmé too well to exhibit his regret to her. Thereupon the young woman, releasing the philosopher, more dead than alive, from the chest in which he was cowering, said to him gravely:

"'Master doctor, don't forget to put this trick in your collection.'"

"I understand, madame!" I said to the duchess. "If I marry, I shall succumb to some unheard-of deviltry; but in that case, be assured that I will offer a model household for the admiration of my contemporaries."

Paris, 1824–1829.

PETTY WORRIES OF CONJUGAL LIFE

PART FIRST

PREFACE

WHEREIN EVERYONE WILL FIND HIS OR HER IMPRESSIONS OF MARRIAGE

A friend mentions a young lady to you: "Good family, well brought up, pretty, and three hundred thousand francs cash." You express a desire to meet the charming object.

As a general rule, all chance interviews are premeditated. And you address this object, suddenly become very shy.

YOU. A charming evening!

SHE. Oh! yes, monsieur.

You are permitted to pay your court to the young person.

THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.—*To her future son-in-law.*—You would hardly believe how susceptible of attachment the dear little girl is.

Meanwhile, the two families are discussing delicate questions of finance.

YOUR FATHER.—*To the mother-in-law.*—My farm is worth five hundred thousand francs, my dear madame!

YOUR FUTURE MOTHER-IN-LAW. And our house is on a street corner, my dear monsieur!

The contract comes next, the terms being discussed by two horrible notaries: one short, one tall.

Then the two families consider it necessary to have you visit the mayor's office and the church, before proceeding to the ceremony of putting the bride, who makes a great pother, to bed.

And afterward!—you are subjected to a thousand unforeseen petty vexations, like this:

The Final, Unexpected Blow

Is this a petty or a great worry? I cannot say; it is great for sons-in-law or for your daughters-in-law; it is exceedingly petty for you.

"Petty—you may think it amusing to say so; but a child costs tremendously!" cries a ten times too fortunate husband, who is christening his eleventh, called *the little last*—a phrase with which wives deceive their families.

What is this worry? you will ask me. Well, this worry is, like many petty conjugal worries, a source of pleasure to someone.

Four months ago you married off your daughter, whom we will call by the sweet name of Caroline, to make of her the type of all wives. Caroline is, as always, a charming young woman, and you have found for her as husband:

It may be a solicitor in a court of first instance, or a junior captain, or an engineer of the third class, or a deputy magistrate, or even a young viscount. But he is more likely to be what sensible families seek above all else, the ideal of their desires: the

only son of a wealthy landed proprietor!—See the *Preface*.

We will call this phœnix ADOLPHE, whatever his rank in life, his age, or the color of his hair.

The solicitor, the captain, the engineer, the magistrate, in a word, the son-in-law, Adolphe, and his family have seen in Mademoiselle Caroline:

1. Mademoiselle Caroline,
2. The only daughter of your wife and yourself.

At this point, we are compelled to demand a division of the question, as they do in the Chamber.

I. Of Your Wife

Your wife will presumably be the heir of a maternal uncle, a gouty old fellow, whom she nurses, coddles, caresses, and humors; to say nothing of her own father's fortune. Caroline has always adored her uncle, her uncle who trotted her on his knee, her uncle who—her uncle whom—that is to say, her uncle—whose fortune is reckoned at two hundred thousand francs.

Of your wife—who is a well-preserved person, but whose age has been the subject of mature reflection and a prolonged investigation on the part of your son-in-law's grandfathers and great-grandfathers. After a number of skirmishes between the mothers-in-law, they have confided to each other their secrets as mature women.

"And you, my dear madame?"

"I am done with it, thank God! and you?"

"So am I, I should hope!" said your wife.

"You can marry Caroline," observed Adolphe's mother to your future son-in-law, "Caroline will be her mother's only heir and her uncle's and her grandfather's."

II. Of Yourself

Who still possess your maternal grandfather, an excellent old gentleman, whose inheritance no one will dispute with you: he is in his dotage, and therefore incapable of making a will.

Of yourself, an amiable man, but with a dissipated youth behind you. Moreover, you are fifty-nine years old, and the crown of your head is like a knee thrust through a gray wig.

3. A dowry of three hundred thousand francs!

4. Caroline's only sister, a little idiot of twelve, in feeble health, who promises not to let her bones grow old.

5. Your own fortune, father-in-law,—in some circles they say *papa father-in-law*,—twenty thousand a year, which will be increased ere long by the falling-in of an inheritance.

6. Your wife's fortune, which should be swelled by two inheritances: the uncle's and the grandfather's:

Three inheritances and accumulations .	750,000 francs
Your fortune	250,000 "
Your wife's fortune	250,000 "
Total	1,250,000 "

which cannot fly away!

There you have the autopsy of all these brilliant marriages which lead their dancing, gormandizing choruses, in white gloves, with flowers at the buttonhole, bouquets of orange-blossoms, gold thread, veils, cabs and coachmen, from the mayor's office to the church, from the church to the banquet, from the banquet to the ball, and from the ball to the nuptial chamber, amid the strains of the orchestra and the consecrated jokes perpetrated by the last remnants of dandyism; for are there not remnants of dandyism all over the world, as there are remnants of English horses? Yes, such is the osteology of the most amorous desires.

The majority of the relatives have said their say concerning this marriage.

Those on the husband's side:

"Adolphe has done a good stroke of business."

Those on the bride's side:

"Caroline has made an excellent match. Adolphe is an only son, and he will have sixty thousand francs a year, *some day or other!*"

Some day the lucky magistrate, the lucky engineer, the lucky captain, or the lucky solicitor, the lucky only son of a rich landowner,—Adolphe, in short,—comes to dine with you, accompanied by his family.

Your daughter Caroline is exceedingly proud of the somewhat protuberant shape of her bust. All women manifest an artless coquetry in connection with their first pregnancy. Like the soldier who tricks himself out for his first battle, they like to

play at languor and suffering; they rise in a certain way and walk with the prettiest affectation. While still in their bloom, they bear a fruit; thus they steal a march on maternity. All their little mannerisms are charming beyond words—the first time.

Your wife, who has become Adolphe's mother-in-law, encases herself in high-pressure corsets. When her daughter laughs, she weeps; when her Caroline parades her good-fortune, she conceals hers. After dinner, the far-seeing eye of the co-mother-in-law divines the works of darkness.

Your wife is *enceinte!* the news bursts forth like a thunderbolt, and your oldest college friend says to you, with a laugh:

"Ah! you have been making more of us?"

You have great hopes of a consultation which is to take place the next day. You, brave man that you are, blush, and hope that it is dropsy; but the doctors confirm your fears of the arrival of a *little last!*

Some faint-hearted husbands go into the country at such times, or carry out a long contemplated trip to Italy. In short, strange confusion reigns in your household. You and your wife are in a false position.

"What's this I hear! you old rascal, aren't you ashamed to—?" an old friend says to you on the boulevard.

"Well, yes! let's see you do as much," you reply in a passion.

"What! on the day your daughter—why, it's

immoral! And an old woman? why, it's a downright infirmity!"

"We have been robbed as if by highwaymen in a wood," says your son-in-law's family.

As in a wood! is a complimentary expression for the mother-in-law.

That family hopes that the child who cuts in three parts the prospects of wealth will be, like all the children of old people, scrofulous, deformed, a monstrosity. Will it be born alive?

That family awaits your wife's lying-in with the anxiety which agitated the Orléans family during the pregnancy of the Duchesse de Berri; a second daughter would ensure the throne to the younger branch, without the onerous conditions imposed by the Revolution of July; Henri V. swept away the crown. Thereafter, the House of Orléans was forced to play double or quits: circumstances gave it the game.

The mother and daughter lie in nine days apart.

Caroline's first child is a pale, thin, little girl, who will not live.

Her mother's last child is a superb boy, weighing twelve pounds, with two teeth and magnificent hair.

You have longed for a son for sixteen years. This conjugal worry is the one of all others to make you wild with joy. For your rejuvenated wife displays at this juncture what we must call the *Indian Summer* of women: she has milk, she nurses the boy! her complexion is bright and clear; she is all pink and white.

At forty-two, she plays the young wife, buys little socks, goes out to walk attended by a nursemaid, embroiders and trims caps. Alexandrine has determined upon the course to pursue, she instructs her daughter by her example; she is fascinating, she is happy. And yet it is a worry, petty to you, great to your son-in-law. This worry is of both genders, it is common to you and your wife. However, in such cases your paternity makes you all the prouder, because it is incontestable, my dear monsieur!

DISCOVERIES

As a general rule, a young woman does not reveal her real character until after she has been married two or three years. She unconsciously conceals her faults amid the first joys, the first merrymakings. She goes into society to dance, she visits her relatives to create a triumph for you, she goes about escorted by the first rogueries of love, she is learning to be a wife. Then she becomes a mother and nurse, and in that situation, full of charming sufferings, which leave neither a moment nor a word for observation, her cares are so multiplied, it is impossible to judge a woman. You require, therefore, three or four years of intimate association before you succeed in discovering something that is horribly depressing, a subject of constant alarms.

Your wife, that young girl in whom the first joys of life and love took the place of charm and wit; that coquettish, animated creature, full of life, whose slightest movements had a delicious

eloquence, has slowly laid aside, one by one, her natural artifices. At last, you have discovered the truth! You have refused to believe it, you have thought that you were mistaken; but no: Caroline lacks wit, she is dull, she is incapable of joking or arguing, and sometimes she has very little tact. You are dismayed. You imagine yourself condemned for life to lead this dear Minette through roads bordered with thorns, where you will leave your self-esteem in tatters.

Already, on many occasions in society, you have been distressed by replies she has made, which have been courteously received; that is to say, people have kept silent instead of smiling; but you were certain that after your departure the women glanced at one another, saying:

"Did you hear Madame Adolphe?"

"Poor little woman, she's as—"

"Stupid as a cabbage."

"How could he, for he is surely a man of intelligence, choose such a—"

"He should mould his wife, teach her how to behave, or else tell her to hold her tongue."

AXIOMS

In our civilization a man is entirely responsible for his wife.

The husband does not mould the wife.

It may be that some day, while calling on Madame de Fischtaminel,—a person of great distinction,—

Caroline has declared and insisted upon it that the little last resembled neither the father nor the mother, but the friend of the family. Perhaps she has enlightened Monsieur de Fischtaminel and undone the work of three years by overthrowing the scaffolding of Madame de Fischtaminel's assertions; and she, ever since that visit, has been extremely cold to you, for she suspects you of having betrayed her to your wife.

Or some evening, after leading an author on to talk about his works, Caroline has concluded by advising the poet, whose works are already numerous, to keep on working for posterity. Sometimes she complains of the slow table service at the houses of people who keep but one servant, and who have greatly put themselves out so as to receive her. Sometimes she speaks slightingly of widows who remarry, before Madame Deschars, married for the third time to an ex-notary, Nicolas-Jean-Jérôme-Népomucène-Ange-Marie-Victor-Joseph Deschars, a friend of your father.

In a word, you are no longer yourself when you are with your wife in company. Like a man riding an ill-tempered horse, who keeps his eyes constantly fixed between his ears, you are entirely absorbed by the attention with which you listen to your Caroline.

To revenge herself for the silence to which unmarried girls are condemned, Caroline talks, or, more accurately, chatters; she seeks to produce an effect, and she succeeds; nothing stops her; she

addresses the most eminent men, the most distinguished women; she asks to be presented, she puts you on the rack. Thenceforth, going into society is like marching to the stake for you.

She begins to call you cross: whereas you are simply attentive, that is all! At last, you confine her to a small circle of friends, for she has made trouble between you and the people upon whom your future depended.

How often you have recoiled from the necessity of remonstrating with her, on waking in the morning when you had prepared her to listen to you! A woman very rarely listens. How often you have recoiled from the burden of your obligations as the master!

The conclusion of your ministerial communication must inevitably be: "You have no wit!"—You foresee the effect of your first lesson. Caroline will say to herself: "Ah! I have no wit!"

No woman ever takes it in good part. Each of you will draw the sword and throw away the scabbard. Six weeks later, Caroline may prove to you that she has just enough wit to minotaurize you, without your noticing it.

Dismayed by this prospect, you exhaust all the oratorical formulas, you search them through, you seek some means of gilding the pill. At last, you find a way to satisfy all Caroline's self-esteems, for—

AXIOM

A married woman has several self-esteems.

You say that you are her best friend, that no one else is in a favorable position to enlighten her; the more elaborate your preparations, the more attentive and curious she becomes. At that moment, she has wit.

You ask your dear Caroline, with your arm about her waist, how it is that she, who is always so clever and bright with you and makes such charming repartees,—you remind her of things she has never said, which you attribute to her, and which she accepts with a smile,—how it is that she can say this or that in society. Doubtless she is, like many women, frightened in crowded salons.

"I know many very distinguished men," you say, "who have the same difficulty."

You name men who are eloquent orators in a small company, but who cannot put two words together in the tribune. Caroline must keep watch upon herself; you praise silence to her as the surest method of displaying wit. In society we love those who listen to us.

Ah! you have broken the ice, you have stepped on the mirror without cracking it; you have passed your hand over the rump of the fiercest and wildest, the most alert, the most clear-sighted, the most restless, the most active, the most jealous, the most ardent, the most impetuous, the simplest, the most refined, the most unreasonable, the most watchful chimera in the moral world: A WOMAN'S VANITY!

Caroline has pressed you reverently to her heart, she has thanked you for your advice, she loves you

the more dearly for it; she prefers to owe everything to you, even wit; she may be foolish, but she knows how to do pretty things, which is much better than saying them!—she loves you. But she wishes to be your pride as well! It is not a question of knowing how to dress well, to be beautiful and fashionable; she proposes to make you proud of her intelligence. You are the luckiest man on earth to have succeeded in extricating yourself from this conjugal pitfall.

"We are going this evening to Madame Deschars's, where they have no idea how to enjoy themselves; they play at all sorts of childish games because of the flock of young wives and girls who are always there; you will see!" she said.

You are so happy that you hum a tune as you go about in your shirt and drawers, arranging all sorts of things about the house. You resemble a hare making his hundred thousand circuits of a flower-strewn greensward perfumed with dew. You do not put on your dressing-gown until the last moment, when the breakfast is on the table. During the day, if you meet friends and the subject of women is mentioned, you stand up for women; you consider women sweet, charming creatures; there is something divine about them.

How often our opinions are dictated by the hidden events of our lives!

You take your wife to Madame Deschars's. Madame Deschars is an exceedingly pious mother of a family, and there are no newspapers to be found in

her house; she watches over her daughters, who are the fruit of three different marriages, and represses them all the more sternly because she herself has, it is said, *some little matters* to reproach herself for during her two former marriages. No one dares to perpetrate a jest beneath her roof. Everything there is pink and white, redolent of sanctity, as in the establishments of widows who are approaching the limits of their third youth. It seems as if every day were the feast of Corpus-Christi.

You, a youthful husband, join the youthful company of young wives, small girls, young unmarried women and young men in Madame Deschars's bedroom. The serious-minded men, the politicians, the whist-playing, tea-drinking guests are in the large salon.

They are playing at guessing words with several meanings, from the answers each one gives to these questions:

"How do you like it?"

"What do you make of it?"

"Where do you put it?"

It is your turn to guess a word, you go into the salon and take part in a discussion there until you are recalled by a smiling little girl. They have tried to find a word for you upon which the most enigmatical answers can be based. Everyone knows that the best way to puzzle powerful intellects is to select a very common word and devise answers which will lead the salon OEdipus a thousand leagues

astray with each of his ideas. The game hardly takes the place of lansquenet or dice, but it is inexpensive.

The word EVIL—*mal*—has been awarded the post of sphinx. They have determined to defeat you. The word means, among other things, the opposite of good; *disease*, in which sense it has innumerable pathological meanings; *mail-coach*,—*malle*,—and a *chest*,—*malle*,—which is of various shapes, covered with all sorts of hair, with all sorts of skin, and provided with ears,* and which travels rapidly, for it carries away what one needs for travelling, as a disciple of the school of Delille would say.

For you, a man of intellect, the sphinx displays his coquetries, spreads his wings and folds them; he shows you his lion's paws, his woman's breast, his horse's loins, his intelligent face; he moves his sacred bands, he rises and flies away, returns and departs anew, sweeps the floor with his terrible tail; he puts forth his gleaming claws and draws them back; he smiles, he capers, he murmurs; his glance is now the glance of a happy child, now of a sedate matron; he is derisive above all else.

"I like it with love."

"I like it chronic."

"I like it covered with horse-hair."

"I like it with a secret drawer."

"I like it open."

"I like it *à cheval*."†

* *Oreille*—ear—means, also, the handle of a bag or trunk.

† *On horseback* or *with horses*.

"I like it as coming from God," said Madame Deschars.

"How do you like it?" you ask your wife.

"I like it legitimate."

Your wife's reply is not understood, and sends you wandering through the star-strewn fields of the infinite, where the mind, dazzled by the multitude of creations, is unable to choose. They place it—

"In a shed."

"In the garret."

"In a steamboat."

"In the press."

"In a wagon."

"In the galleys."

"In the ears."

"In a shop."

Last of all, your wife says to you:

"In my bed."

You had almost guessed it, but you know of no word to which that answer will apply, for Madame Deschars would not permit anything improper.

"What do you make of it?"

"My only joy," observes your wife, after all the others have answered and caused you to travel over the whole world of linguistic conjectures.

This reply makes an impression on everybody, yourself particularly; so you persist in trying to fathom its meaning. You think of the bottle of hot water, wrapped in cloths, which your wife puts at her feet when it is very cold—of the warming-pan—of her nightcap—of her handkerchief—of her

curl-papers—of the hem of her chemise—of her embroidery—of her undervest—of your nightcap—of the pillow—of the night light-stand, but can find nothing to answer the purpose.

Finally, as the greatest joy of those who answer is to see their Œdipus mystified, as every word suggested instead of the true one throws them into fits of laughter, men of superior mould, finding no word that will fit in with all the answers, prefer to acknowledge defeat rather than guess three or four words to no purpose. According to the laws of this harmless game, you are sentenced to return to the salon after paying a forfeit; but you are so exceedingly puzzled by your wife's answers, that you ask to know the word.

"*Mal!*" cries one of the children.

You understand everything except your wife's answers: she has not played the game fairly. Neither Madame Deschars nor any of the young women have understood her. She has cheated. You rebel, there is a general uprising of little girls and young women. You think and think and cudgel your brains. You desire an explanation, and all the others share your desire.

"In what acceptation did you take the word, my dear, in Heaven's name?" you ask Caroline.

"Why, *mâle!*"*

Madame Deschars bites her lip and manifests the greatest displeasure; the young wives blush and lower their eyes; the little girls make theirs as big

* Male or masculine.

as saucers, nudge one another with their elbows, and open their ears. You stand with your feet glued to the floor, and you have such a taste of salt in your throat that you think of the way in which Lot was delivered from his wife.

You perceive an infernal life before you; society is impossible.

Better to go to the galleys than to remain at home with that triumphant imbecility.

AXIOM

Moral tortures are as much more intense than physical pain as the soul is higher than the body.

You abandon the idea of enlightening your wife.

Caroline is a second edition of Nebuchadnezzar, for some day she will be transformed, like the royal chrysalis, from the cruelty of the hairy beast to the ferocity of the imperial purple.

A YOUNG WIFE'S ATTENTIONS

Among the keenest delights of a bachelor's life, every man reckons the privilege of rising when he pleases. The sweet fancies of the awakening atone for the melancholy of the retiring. A bachelor twists and turns in his bed; he can gape until one would think that a murder was being committed, shout and laugh as if his joy knew no bounds. He can be false to his oaths of yesterday, let his fire burn on his hearth and his candle in the socket, and go to sleep again in spite of urgent work to be

done. He can hurl curses at his boots, all ready to be worn, which hold out their black orifices to him and prick up their ears, can refuse to see the steel boot-hooks gleaming in a ray of sunlight that filters through the curtains, can disregard the sonorous call of the persistent clock, and turn toward the wall, saying to himself: "Yesterday, oh! yes, yesterday it was very urgent; but to-day it can wait. YESTERDAY is a fool, TO-DAY is the wise man; between the two there is the night which brings counsel, the night which illumines the mind.—I ought to go, I ought to do this or that, I promised.—I am a coward—but how can I resist the downy charms of my bed? My feet are soft, I must be ill, I am too happy.—I want to see once more the landscape of my dream, and my women without claws, and their winged figures and their obliging dispositions. In fact, I have found the grain of salt to sprinkle on the tail of the bird that always flew away. That coquette's feet are caught in the lime, I have her."

Your servant reads your newspapers, he opens your letters, he leaves you in peace. And you fall asleep again, lulled by the indistinct rumbling of the first vehicles. Those horrible, complaining, active vehicles, laden with provisions, with tin udders filled with milk, which make an infernal uproar clattering over the pavements, seem to you to be rolling over cloth and remind you vaguely of Napoléon Musard's orchestra. When your house shakes in all its members and sways unsteadily on its keel,

you fancy that you are a sailor, cradled by gentle zephyrs.

All these joys you yourself cut short, throwing your nightcap aside as one crumples his napkin after dinner, as you raise yourself on your—ah! it is called *your sitting part.* And you scold yourself, apostrophizing yourself harshly, as, for instance: "Ah! *ventrebleu!* you must get up.—The diligent hunter, my friend, who wishes to make his fortune, must rise betimes;—you're a lazy rascal!"

You continue in that strain. You look about your bedroom, you collect your thoughts. At last, you get out of bed—spontaneously!—courageously!—of your own will!—You go to the fire, you consult the most obliging of all the clocks, you interject hopes thus conceived: "So-and-So is lazy, I can still catch him!—I must hurry.—I will overtake him if he has gone out.—He may have waited for me.—There is fifteen minutes' grace in all appointments, even between debtor and creditor."

You pull on your boots in a frenzy, you dress yourself as you do when you are afraid of being surprised scantily clothed, you experience all the joys of haste, you test the firmness of your buttons; at last, you emerge like a victor, puffing, waving your cane, wagging your ears, galloping.

After all, you say to yourself, you are accountable to no one, you are your own master!

But you, poor Benedick, have been foolish enough to say to your wife: "To-morrow, my love,"—sometimes she knows it two days beforehand,—"I must

get up very early."—Unhappy Adolphe, you have laid great stress on the importance of the appointment: "It's about—and about—and also about—etc."

Two hours before daybreak, Caroline wakes you very gently, and says to you very softly:

"My dear, my dear!"

"What is it? fire?—"

"No, go to sleep, I made a mistake; see, the hands of the clock were like that. It's only four o'clock, you still have two hours to sleep."

To say to a man: "You have only two hours more to sleep," is very much like saying—to compare small things with great—to a criminal: "It's now five o'clock, half-past seven is the time fixed."—Your subsequent slumber is disturbed by a gray, winged thought, which bumps against the windows of your brain after the manner of bats.

At such times a woman is as prompt as a demon coming to claim a soul that has been sold to him. When the clock strikes five, your wife's voice, too familiar, alas! rings in your ear; it accompanies the bell of the clock and says to you with fiendish sweetness:

"Adolphe, it's five o'clock, my dear; get up."

"*Ouhouhi-ououhoin.*"

"Adolphe, you will miss your appointment, you said so yourself."

"*Ououhouin-ouhouhi.*"

You turn your head in desperation.

"Come, my dear, I got everything ready last

night. You must go, my love; do you want to miss your appointment? Get up, I say, Adolphe! off with you. Here it is broad daylight."

Caroline rises and throws off the bedclothes; she proposes to show you that she can get up without hesitation. She throws open the screens and admits the morning air and sunlight, and the noises of the street. She returns to the bedside.

"Do get up, dear! Who would ever have believed that you were so lacking in strength of character? Oh! these men!—I am only a woman, but when I say a thing, it is done."

You rise, grumbling and cursing the sacrament of marriage. You do not deserve the slightest credit for your heroism; it is your wife who has risen, not you. Caroline finds everything that you need with heart-rending promptness; she provides for everything, she gives you a muffler in winter, a lawn shirt with blue stripes in summer, you are treated like a child; you are still half-asleep, she dresses you, she takes all the trouble; you are ejected from your own house. Except for her, everything would go wrong! She calls you back to give you a paper, a portfolio. You think of nothing, she thinks of everything.

You return some hours later for breakfast, between eleven and twelve o'clock. The maid is at the door, on the stairs, in the area, talking to somebody's footman; she runs away when she hears or sees you. Your servant sets the table without the slightest haste, he looks out of the window, he

saunters in and out like a man who knows that he can take all the time he chooses. You ask where your wife is, assuming that she is somewhere about the house.

"Madame is still in bed," says the maid.

You find your wife languid, indolent, weary, sleepy. She lay awake all night in order to wake you; then she went back to bed, and she is hungry.

You are the cause of all this confusion of domestic arrangements. If breakfast is not ready, she lays it to your early departure. If she is not dressed, if everything is in disorder, it is your fault. To everything that does not go right, she replies:

"You had to get up so early!"

Monsieur got up so early! is the universal excuse. She makes you go to bed early because you got up early. She can do nothing during the day, because you got up early. Even eighteen months afterward she still says:

"You would never get up without me."

To her friends, she says:

"Monsieur rise early!—Why, if I weren't here, if it weren't for me, he would never rise!"

A man whose hair is turning gray remarks to her:

"That speaks well for you, madame."

This criticism, being somewhat pointed, puts an end to her boasting.

This petty worry, when it has been repeated two or three times, teaches you to live alone in the bosom of your family, not to speak all your thoughts aloud there, but to trust no one but yourself; it often

seems to you a matter of doubt whether the advantages of the nuptial bed counterbalance its disadvantages.

ANNOYANCES

You have passed from the exuberant *allegro* of the bachelor to the grave *andante* of the paterfamilias.

Instead of that graceful, prancing English horse, pawing the ground between the varnished shafts of a tilbury light as your heart, and moving his glistening flanks beneath the fourfold network of straps and reins which you can handle, with what grace and elegance the Champs-Elysées know! you drive an honest, stout Norman horse with an ambling gait.

You have learned paternal patience, and you do not lack opportunities to display it. Wherefore your face wears a serious expression.

By your side is a servant evidently of a twofold nature, like the carriage. This four-wheeled vehicle mounted on English springs has a fat paunch, resembling a Rouen flat-boat; it has glass doors and an endless number of economical appliances. It is an open carriage in fine weather, and becomes a coupé on rainy days. Apparently light, it is weighed down by six people and exhausts your only horse.

On the back seat, displayed like lovely flowers, are your blooming young wife, and her mother, a buxom rose-mallow with many leaves. These two flowers of the female species talk about you in whispers, while the noise of the wheels and your absorption in the duties of driver, combined with

your paternal distrust, prevent your hearing their conversation.

On the front seat is a neat, pretty little nurse-maid holding a little girl in her lap; beside her shines resplendent a boy in a pleated red shirt, who leans out of the carriage, tries to stand on the cushions, and draws down upon his head innumerable words which he knows to be mere empty threats, the "Pray be good, Adolphe!" and the "I will not bring you again, monsieur!" of all mammas.

Mamma is secretly annoyed beyond measure by this noisy boy; she has lost her temper twenty times, and twenty times the face of the sleeping girl has calmed her.

"I am his mother," she says to herself.

And she ends by holding her little Adolphe.

You have put in execution the magnificent idea of taking your family to drive. You started in the morning from your house, where the families on the other floors ran to the windows, envying the privilege which your wealth gives you of going into the country, and returning without the discomforts of public conveyances. Now, you have driven the ill-fated Norman horse across Paris to Vincennes, from Vincennes to Saint-Maur, from Saint-Maur to Charenton, from Charenton to a point opposite some island or other, which your wife and your mother-in-law declared to be lovelier than all the landscapes through which you had taken them.

"Let's go to Maisons!" they cried.

You went to Maisons, near Alfort. You are returning on the left bank of the Seine, amid a cloud of very dark Olympian dust; your horse draws your family with painful exertion; alas! your self-esteem vanishes when you see his sunken flanks and a bone protruding on either side; his hide is flecked with sweat which has exuded and dried several times over, and which has contributed equally with the dust to make his hair sticky and clotted and rough. He resembles an angry hedgehog, you fear that he is foundered, and you caress him with the whip with a feeling of melancholy which he understands, for he shakes his head like a cab-horse, worn out by his lamentable existence.

You are much attached to your horse; he is an excellent beast and cost twelve hundred francs. When one has the honor to be the father of a family, he thinks as much of twelve hundred francs as you think of that horse. You reflect upon the alarming outlay for extra expenses in case you should have to give Coco a rest. You will hire cabs for two days for your business. Your wife will sulk because she cannot go out; she will go out and will hire a carriage. The horse will require extras which you will find on the account of your only groom, a unique groom, whom you watch closely as you do all unique things.

All these thoughts you express in the gentle movement with which you draw the whip along the side of the animal as he ploughs through the black dust which carpets the road by La Verrerie.

At this juncture, little Adolphe, who does not know how to amuse himself in that rolling-box, twists about and grows more and more despondent, and his grandmother anxiously asks him:

"What's the matter?"

"I'm hungry," says the child.

"He's hungry," the mother says to her daughter.

"Well, why shouldn't he be hungry? it's half-past five, we started two hours ago and here we are only at the barrier!"

"Your husband ought to have arranged for us to dine in the country."

"He prefers to make his horse do two leagues more and go home."

"The cook would have had her holiday. But Adolphe is right, after all. It's more economical to dine at home," rejoins the mother-in-law.

"Adolphe," cries your wife, stung by the word economical, "we are going so slowly that I shall be sea-sick, and you are driving right in the thickest of this black dust. What are you thinking about? my dress and my hat will be ruined."

"Would you prefer to ruin the horse?" you ask, thinking that you have made an unanswerable rejoinder.

"It's not a question of your horse, but of your child, who is starving to death: it is seven hours since he had anything to eat. So whip up your horse! Upon my word, one would say that you cared more for your old nag than for your child!"

You dare not strike the horse with the whip: he

might have vigor enough still to become excited and break into a gallop.

"No, Adolphe is determined to vex me, he is driving slower than ever," the young woman says to her mother. "Go on, my dear, go as you choose. And then you'll call me extravagant when you find I have bought a new hat."

Thereupon you mutter some words that are lost in the noise of the wheels.

"And you answer me with arguments that lack common-sense!" cries Caroline.

You continue to talk with your head turned toward the carriage one moment and toward the horse the next, to avoid accident.

"Oh! yes! run into somebody! tip us over, and then you will be rid of us. Really, Adolphe, your child is starving, he's as pale as death!"

"But he's doing what he can, Caroline," says the mother-in-law.

Nothing irritates you so much as to be defended by your mother-in-law. She is a hypocrite, she is overjoyed to see you at odds with her daughter; she throws oil on the fire, very gently, and with infinite precautions.

When you reach the barrier, your wife is mute, she has nothing to say, but sits with her arms folded and avoids looking at you. You have neither soul nor heart nor sentiment. No one but you could conceive such pleasure-parties. If you are so unfortunate as to remind Caroline that she herself, that morning, insisted upon taking the excursion,

in the name of her children and her supply of nourishment,—she nurses her little girl,—you will be overwhelmed by an avalanche of cold and cutting retorts.

So you put up with everything *in order not to sour the milk of a nursing mother, in whom you must overlook some petty foibles*, says your infernal mother-in-law in your ear.

You have at your heart all the frenzy of Orestes.

To the sacramental question asked by the customs official: "Have you anything to declare?" your wife replies:

"I declare a large stock of ill-humor and dust."

She laughs, the official laughs, and you long to tip your family in the Seine.

Unluckily for you, you remember the merry, wayward girl who wore a little pink hat and who fluttered about in your tilbury when, six years before, you drove over the same road on your way to eat a *matelote*. What an idea! Madame Schontz was very anxious about children, oh! yes, and about her hat, when the lace trimming was torn to shreds in the thickets! she was anxious about nothing at all, not even her dignity, for she scandalized the forest-keeper at Vincennes by the recklessness of her somewhat *risqué* dance.

You return home, you have urged your Norman horse savagely, you have avoided neither your beast's displeasure nor your wife's.

That evening Caroline has very little milk. If the little one shrieks till your head aches as she

pulls at her mother's breast, the fault is all yours, who consider your horse's health of more importance than your son's, who was starving, and your daughter's, whose supper vanished in a discussion in which your wife was in the right, *as always!*

"After all," she says, "men are not mothers."

You leave the room and you hear your mother-in-law consoling your wife with these terrible words:

"They are all selfish—pray, be calm—your father was exactly the same."

THE DECREE

It is eight o'clock as you enter your wife's bedroom. It is brilliantly lighted. The lady's-maid and cook are hovering about. The chairs are piled high with dresses that have been tried on, with flowers tossed aside.

The hairdresser is there, an artist *par excellence*, a sovereign authority, everything and nothing at the same time. You have heard other servants going to and fro; there have been orders given and revoked, commissions well or poorly executed. The confusion is at its height. That bedroom is a studio whence a salon Venus will come forth.

You wife wishes to be the loveliest woman at the ball to which you are going. Is it on your account, on her own solely, or on some other person's? Momentous questions!

You do not so much as think of them.

You are swathed, corded, harnessed in your ball

costume; you walk with measured step, looking, watching, thinking about talking business on neutral ground with a note-broker, a notary, or a banker, to whom you prefer not to give the advantage of going to see them at their own houses.

A curious fact which everyone may have observed, but of which the cause is almost undiscoverable, is the special distaste for discussion, and for answering questions, which men display when they are fully dressed and ready to go out for the evening. There are few husbands who are not taciturn at the moment of setting out, and deeply absorbed in reflections which vary according to their characters. Those who do reply give short and peremptory answers.

At such times, the women themselves become excessively trying to the nerves; they consult you, they insist upon having your advice as to the best way of concealing the stem of a rose, of adjusting a cluster of heather, of twining a scarf. They are never concerned about these trifles, in reality, but about themselves. According to a witty English expression, they are fishing for compliments, and sometimes for something more than compliments.

A child just out of school would detect the object concealed among the branches of these pretexts; but you know your wife so well, and you have so often bantered her good-naturedly concerning her moral and physical advantages, that you are hard-hearted enough to tell her your opinion briefly and conscientiously; whereupon you force Caroline to resort to

that decisive question, a difficult question for any woman to ask, even after twenty years of married life:

"So I am not to your taste, it seems?"

Drawn by that question to the real ground of conflict, you toss her compliments, which are the small coin by which you set least store, the sous and liards from your purse.

"That dress is lovely!—I never saw you so becomingly dressed!—The blue, the pink, the yellow, the puce"—take your choice—"is wonderfully becoming to you.—That way of wearing your hair is very original.—When you enter the ball-room, everybody will admire you.—You will be not only the loveliest woman there, but the best dressed.—They will all be frantic because they haven't your taste.—Beauty we are not responsible for, but good taste is like wit, something of which we may be proud."

"Do you think so? Are you in earnest, Adolphe?"

Your wife is flirting with you. She selects this moment to extort from you your alleged opinion of this or that one of her friends, and to whisper the price of the lovely objects you are praising. Nothing is too dear that will give you pleasure. She sends away her cook.

"Let us go," you say.

She sends away the maid, after dismissing her hairdresser, and begins to turn about in front of her mirror, displaying to you her most glorious charms.

"Let us go," you say.

"You are in a great hurry," she replies.

And she comes toward you, with a mincing step, exhibiting herself like a beautiful piece of fruit in the show-window of a dealer.

As you have dined well, you kiss her on the forehead, you no longer feel in a mood to countersign your opinions. Caroline becomes serious.

The carriage has driven up. The whole household watches madame as she goes away; she is the masterpiece to which each one has put his hand, and they all admire the common work.

Your wife goes away intoxicated with herself and ill-pleased with you. She proceeds triumphantly to the ball, like an expensive picture, lauded to the skies in the studio, caressed by the painter, and sent to the immense bazaar of the Louvre, to the Salon. But, alas! your wife finds fifty women lovelier than she is; they have devised madly extravagant costumes, more or less original; and the same thing befalls the feminine masterpiece that befalls the painter's masterpiece at the Louvre; the glory of your wife's dress is dimmed by another almost like it, the color of which, being more brilliant, eclipses hers. Caroline is nobody, she is hardly noticed. When there are sixty pretty women in a salon, appreciation of beauty vanishes, one ceases to know anything about beauty. Your wife becomes an extremely commonplace article. The little ruse of her artificial smile is not understood among the superb expressions of her rivals, beside women with bold and haughty glances. She is blotted out, she is not asked to dance. She tries to arrange her

features to simulate contentment, but as she is far from content, she hears someone say: "Madame Adolphe looks very unhappy to-night."—The women ask her hypocritically if she is not feeling well; why does she not dance? They have an extended repertory of malicious insinuations concealed by a cloak of good-humor, plastered over with kindliness calculated to cause a saint's damnation, to make a monkey serious and a demon cold.

You, innocent creature, who play cards, go from one room to another, and do not see a single one of the thousand pin-pricks with which your wife's self-esteem has been tattooed,—you go up to her and whisper:

"What's the matter?"

"Order *my* carriage."

This *my* is one of the results of marriage. In the course of two years, she has said *monsieur's* carriage, *the* carriage, *our* carriage, and, finally, *my* carriage.

You have promised to play again, you have to give somebody his revenge or to make up your losses.

At this point, we assume, Adolphe, that you are enough of a man to say yes, disappear, and not order the carriage.

You have a friend, you send him to dance with your wife, for you have started upon a system of concessions which will ruin you: you already recognize the usefulness of a friend.

But you end by ordering the carriage. Your wife enters it with rage smouldering in her heart, she

settles herself in her corner, muffles herself in her hood, folds her arms in her cloak, curls up in a ball like a cat, and says not a word.

O husbands! know that at that moment you can, if you choose, make up to her for everything, set everything right; and the impetuosity of lovers who have basked in flashing glances throughout a whole evening never fails to do it! Yes, you can take her home triumphant, she has nobody now but you, and you have one chance remaining, that of ravishing your wife. Bah! you ask her, imbecile, blockhead, indifferent booby that you are: "What's the matter?"

AXIOM

A husband should always know what is the matter with his wife, for she always knows what is not.

"I am cold," she says.

"It was a magnificent party."

"Pooh! pooh! no distinction! people have a mania nowadays for inviting all Paris to a party in a closet. There were women even on the stairs; the dresses suffered terribly; mine was ruined."

"All present enjoyed themselves."

"Oh! you men play cards and that's all you care about. When you're once married, you think as much about your wives as lions do about painting."

"I shouldn't know you, you were so bright and happy and lively when we arrived."

"Oh! you would never understand. I asked you to come away and you kept me there; as if women

ever do anything without a reason. You have some wits, I suppose, but at times you are really a puzzle, I don't know what you can be thinking about."

Once upon this ground, the quarrel soon becomes bitter. When you offer your wife your hand to assist her from the carriage, you touch a wooden image; she thanks you in a tone which puts you on the same level with your servant. You understood your wife no better before the ball than now, you follow her with difficulty, she does not go upstairs, she flies. There is a complete rupture.

The lady's-maid also is enveloped in disgrace; she is received with sharp *noes* and *yeses*, dry as Brussels biscuits, which she swallows with a side-glance at you.

"Monsieur never does anything else!" she grumbles.

You alone are responsible for the change in madame's mood. Madame goes to bed; she proposes to be revenged on you for failing to understand her. She does not understand you. She curls herself up in her corner in the most disagreeable and most hostile fashion; she is enveloped in her chemise, her night-jacket, and her nightcap, like a bale of clock machinery setting out for the Indies. She says neither good-night nor good-morning, nor my dear, nor Adolphe; you do not exist, you are a mere bag of flour.

Your Caroline, who was so alluring five hours earlier in that same room, where she wriggled about like an eel, is like a pig of lead. You might be the Tropical Zone in person, astride of the Equator, and

you could not melt the glaciers of that little Switzerland personified, who pretends to be asleep, and who would freeze you from head to foot at need. If you ask her a hundred times over what the matter is, she answers with a *final decree*, like the Germanic Diet or the conference of London.

Nothing is the matter, she is tired, she is sleepy.

The more you insist, the more firmly she intrenches herself behind the ramparts of ignorance and *chevaux de frise*. When you lose your patience, Caroline has begun to dream! You grumble and you are lost.

AXIOM

As women are always able to describe their grandeurs, their pettinesses are what they leave for us to divine.

Perhaps Caroline will deign to tell you also that she already feels very poorly; but she laughs in her nightcap when you fall asleep, and heaps maledictions on your slumbering body.

WOMEN'S LOGIC

You fancy that you have married a creature endowed with reason; you are sadly mistaken, my friend.

AXIOM

Sensitive beings are not sensible beings.

Sentiment is not reasoning, reason is not pleasure, and pleasure certainly is no reason.

"Oh! monsieur!"

Say "Ah!" yes, ah! You must hurl that ah! from the lowest depths of your thoracic cavity, as you rush frantically forth from your house, or return to your study, covered with confusion.

Why? how? who has vanquished, overthrown, slain you? Your wife's logic, which is not the logic of Aristotle, nor Ramus, nor Kant, nor Condillac, nor Robespierre, nor Napoléon; but which is akin to all varieties of logic, and which we must call the logic of all women, of Englishwomen as well as of Italians, Normans, and Bretons,—ah! they are unconquered!—Parisians, and, lastly, of the women in the moon, if there be women in that nocturnal country, with which earthly women evidently are in communication, angels that they are!

The discussion began after breakfast. Discussions between a husband and wife can never take place at any other time.

A man, no matter how much he would like to do it, should never engage in a discussion with his wife in bed: she has too many advantages over him and can reduce him to silence too easily. On leaving the conjugal bed, wherein there is a pretty woman, a man is hungry, when he is young. Breakfast is a decidedly cheerful meal, and cheerfulness is not argumentative. In fine, you do not broach the matter until you have taken your coffee with cream or your tea.

Let us suppose that you have taken it into your head to send your boy away to school. Fathers are all hypocrites, and are never willing to admit that

their own flesh and blood is a sore annoyance to them when it runs about on its two legs, puts its audacious hands on everything, and frisks around the house like a tadpole. Your child yelps and mews and whines, he breaks, cracks, or soils the furniture, and furniture is dear; he makes swords out of everything, he loses your papers, and he cuts figures out of the newspaper you have not read.

His mother says to him: "Take it!" with respect to everything of yours.

But she says: "Take care!" with respect to everything of her own.

The crafty creature coins money with your possessions to purchase her own tranquillity. Her hypocritical assumption of the part of a kind-hearted mother is sheltered behind her child, the child is her confederate. They are in league against you, like Robert Macaire and Bertrand against a shareholder. The child is a hatchet with which everything of yours is broken open and rifled. The child goes on marauding ventures in your wardrobe, triumphantly or slyly; he appears arrayed in soiled underclothing, he brings forth into the light articles of the toilet sentenced to execution. He exhibits to a friend whose acquaintance you are cultivating, to the fashionable Madame de Fischtaminel, belts to draw in your waist, stumps of sticks of preparations for curling your moustache, old waistcoats faded at the armholes, socks slightly blackened at the heels and yellow at the toes. How can you explain that those stains are caused by the leather of your boots?

Your wife smiles as she looks at your friend, and you dare not lose your temper, so you smile too; but what a smile! only the wretched are familiar with it.

Moreover, the child causes you to tremble with terror when your razors are not in their place. If you are angry, the little rascal laughs and shows two rows of pearls; if you scold him, he cries. The mother flies to the spot. And such a mother! a mother who will proceed to hate you if you do not yield. There is no *mezzo termine* with women: a man is either a monster or the best of fathers.

At certain moments, you can understand Herod's famous decrees concerning the massacre of the innocents, which have been surpassed only by those of the good Charles X.!

Your wife has returned to her sofa, you are pacing the room, you halt in front of her and broach the question fairly with this interjectional remark:

"Really, Caroline, we must send Charles to a boarding-school!"

"Charles cannot go to boarding-school," she rejoins, in a soft, sweet voice.

"He is six years old, the age at which a child's education should begin."

"In the first place, seven is the age. Little princes are not turned over by their governess to their tutor until they are seven. That is the law and the prophets. I don't see why the rules adopted for royal children shouldn't apply to bourgeois children? Is your child more advanced than theirs? The King of Rome—"

"The King of Rome is no criterion."

"Isn't the King of Rome the Emperor's son?"—She leads the discussion away from the original question.—"That's a new idea! You don't propose to accuse the Empress, do you? the child was brought into the world by Dr. Dubois in presence of—"

"I said nothing of the sort—"

"You never let me finish my sentence, Adolphe."

"I say that the King of Rome"—here you begin to raise your voice—"that the King of Rome, who was barely four years old when he left France, cannot be held up as an example."

"Even so, the Duc de Bordeaux wasn't turned over to his governor, Monsieur le Duc de Rivière, until he was seven."

Logic.

"As to the Duc de Bordeaux, that's a different matter—"

"You agree, then, that a child should not be sent to school before he is seven?" she says with emphasis.

More logic.

"I agree to nothing of the sort, my dear love. There is a vast difference between public education and private education."

"That is just why I don't want to send Charles to school just yet. A boy should be stronger than he is before he is sent away from home."

"Charles is very strong for his years."

"Strong?—oh! these men! Why, Charles has a

very weak constitution, he takes after you."—The *you* is beginning.—"If you wish to lose your son, all you need do is send him to school.—But I have noticed for some time past that the child annoys you."

"Nonsense! my child annoy me! that is just like you! We are responsible for our children to themselves! we really must begin Charles's education; he is acquiring most unfortunate habits here at home; he obeys nobody, he fancies that everything is at his disposal; he deals out blows and no one returns them. He ought to go among his equals; otherwise he will have a most detestable disposition."

"Thanks! so I am bringing up my child badly, eh?"

"I don't say that; but you will always invent excellent reasons for keeping him at home."

Here there is an active exchange of *yous*, and the discussion assumes a bitter tone on both sides. Your wife is very willing to wither you with the *you*, but she is offended by your reciprocating.

"So that is your real motive! you wish to take my child from me, you realize that he stands between us, you wish to tyrannize over me at your leisure, and you sacrifice your son! Oh! I have intellect enough to understand you."

"Why, you make me a veritable Abraham, knife in hand! One would think that there were no schools. The schools are all empty, people don't send their children to school."

"You try to make me out altogether too absurd," she retorts. "I know very well that there are schools, but people don't send their children to school at the age of six, and Charles shall not go!"

"Come, come, my dear, don't get excited."

"As if I ever did get excited! I am a woman and know how to suffer."

"Let us look at the matter reasonably."

"Yes, you have talked nonsense long enough."

"It is time that Charles should be taught to read and write; later, he would encounter difficulties which would make it unpleasant for him."

Thereupon you talk for ten minutes without a single interruption, and conclude with a "Well?" armed with an accent which represents an interrogation point with a very pronounced crook.

"Well," she says, "it is not time to send Charles to school yet."

You have not gained an inch.

"But, my dear, Monsieur Deschars sent his little Jules to school at six. Let us visit some of the schools, you will find a vast number of children of six in attendance."

You talk ten minutes more without interruption, and then you propound another "Well?"

"Little Deschars came back with chilblains," Caroline replies.

"But Charles has chilblains here."

"Never," she says, with a haughty toss of the head.

Thus, after half an hour, the main discussion is

broken off by a collateral discussion as to whether Charles has or has not had chilblains.

You hurl contradictory assertions at each other, you no longer believe each other, you are driven to appeal to third parties.

AXIOM

Every household has its court of appeal, which deals with matters of form only, never of substance.

The maid is summoned, she comes and takes your wife's side. The discussion is illumined by the fact that Charles has never had chilblains.

Caroline looks at you triumphantly and utters these preposterous words:

"You see that it's impossible to send Charles to school."

You go out choking with anger. There is no possible way of proving to that woman that there is not the slightest connection between the proposition to send her son to school and the chance of his having or not having chilblains.

That evening, after dinner, before a score of people, you hear that atrocious creature conclude her long conversation with a friend of her own sex with the words:

"He insisted on sending Charles to school, but I convinced him that we must wait a while."

Some husbands, under such circumstances, give vent to their wrath in public, and thus bring about their own *minotaurization* six weeks later; but they

are the gainers to this extent, that Charles is sent away to school on the occasion of his first lapse. Others shatter crockery in the throes of an inward frenzy. Shrewd men say nothing, and bide their time.

Woman's logic is displayed on the slightest pretext, apropos of a drive, the placing of a piece of furniture, or a change of abode. This logic, remarkable for its simplicity, consists in never expressing more than a single idea, and that the one which contains a statement of their will. Like every part of the female nature, this system can be solved by two algebraic terms: Yes—No. There are also a few shakes of the head which take the place of everything else.

The Jesuitism of Women

The most jesuitical of Jesuits is a thousand times less jesuitical than the least jesuitical woman—judge, therefore, how jesuitical women are! They are so jesuitical that even the most astute of Jesuits himself could never guess how jesuitical a woman is; for there are innumerable ways of being jesuitical, and a woman is so artfully jesuitical, that she has the art of being jesuitical without having the jesuitical air. One may convince a Jesuit—rarely, to be sure, but one may sometimes convince him—that he is a Jesuit; but try to convince a woman that she acts or talks like a Jesuit! she would allow herself to be chopped in pieces before she would admit it.

She, jesuitical! she, the very soul of loyalty and

delicacy! she, jesuitical! But what do we mean by "being jesuitical?" As if she knew what it is to be jesuitical? What are Jesuits? She has never seen or heard of Jesuits.—"You're the Jesuit!"—and she proves it to you, explaining jesuitically that you are a subtle Jesuit.

Here is one of innumerable examples of woman's jesuitism, and this example constitutes the most horrible of the petty worries of conjugal life—it is, perhaps, the greatest of them all.

Impelled by the desire, a thousand times expressed, a thousand times repeated, of Caroline, who complained of having to go on foot, or of being unable to replace her hat, her umbrella, her dress, or some other portion of her toilet often enough;

Of not being able to dress her child as a sailor, as a lancer, as an artillerist in the National Guard, as a Scotchman with bare legs and a feather in his cap, in a jacket, in a redingote, in a velvet smock-frock, in boots, in trousers; of not being able to purchase enough toys, mice that run of themselves, complete little households, etc.;

Or to return Madame Deschars's and Madame de Fischtaminel's courtesies: a ball, an evening-party, a dinner; or to hire a box at the play, in order to avoid sitting in the gallery between men who are too polite or half insulting, and having to hunt up a cab at the end of a play:

"You think that you are saving money, but you are mistaken," she says to you; "men are all the same! I spoil my shoes, I spoil my hat, my shawl

gets drenched, everything is rumpled, my silk stockings are splashed with mud. You save twenty francs for a carriage—not even twenty francs, for a cab costs you four francs, so it is only sixteen! and you lose fifty francs in the matter of dress, and suffer in your self-esteem when you see a faded hat on my head; you don't stop to think why, but it's your infernal cabs. I say nothing of the bore of being pulled about and jostled by a crowd of men, for you seem to be indifferent to that!"

Of not being able to buy a piano instead of hiring one; or to follow the fashions.—There are women who have all the novelties, but at what a price!—She would rather jump out of the window than do as they do, for she loves you, she says whimperingly. She does not understand such women!—Of not being able to drive on the Champs-Elysées, lying back luxuriously in her carriage, like Madame de Fischtaminel.—There's a woman who understands life! and who has a good husband, well taught, well disciplined, and lucky! his wife would go through fire and water for him!

At last, vanquished in a thousand conjugal scenes, vanquished by the most logical arguments—the late Tripier and the late Merlin are mere children, as the last Worry proved to you many times over—vanquished by the most catlike caresses, vanquished by tears, vanquished by your own words—for on such occasions a woman crouches in all the corners of her house like a jaguar; she does not seem to be listening to you or paying any heed to you; but if a word,

a gesture, a desire, a remark escapes you, she arms herself with it, sharpens it, and hurls it at you hundreds and hundreds of times—vanquished by seductive monkey-tricks: "If you will do this, I will do that;" they become at such times worse hagglers than the Jews, than the Greeks—who sell perfumes and little girls—than the Arabs—who sell little boys and horses—than the Swiss, the Genevans, bankers, and, worse than all the rest, the Genoese.

Well, vanquished as men are vanquished, you determine to risk a certain portion of your capital in an undertaking. Some afternoon, between daylight and dark, as you sit side by side, or some morning, when you wake, while Caroline is beside you, still half-asleep, fresh and rosy against the white sheets, her face smiling amid her laces, you say to her: "You want this thing! You want that! You said this! You said that!"—In short, you enumerate, in a moment, the innumerable longings with which she has rent your heart many and many a time; for there is nothing more horrible than to be unable to satisfy the desires of a beloved wife! and you conclude thus:

"Well, my dear love, I have an opportunity to quintuple a hundred thousand francs, and I have decided to go into the affair."

She is fully awake in an instant, she sits up on—well, in a way that is conventionally called a sitting posture, she kisses you, and—there, there!

"You are a good boy," are her first words.

Let us omit her last words: they form an indescribable, confused specimen of onomatopœia.

"Now," she says, "tell me all about it!"

And you try to explain it. In the first place, women cannot understand any sort of business, they prefer not to seem to understand it; they do understand it—but where, when, how? they probably understand it when they choose,—in the season,—when the spirit moves them. Your dear love, Caroline, overjoyed, says that you were wrong to take her wishes, her groans, her craving for new dresses seriously. She is afraid of this enterprise, she takes fright at the mention of directors, shares, and especially of floating capital; dividends do not seem certain.

AXIOM

Women are always afraid of anything that is to be divided.

In a word, Caroline is afraid of snares; but she is enchanted to know that she can have her carriage, her box at the play, all the different costumes for her child, etc. While pretending to dissuade you, she is visibly pleased by the thought of your investing your money in the undertaking.

FIRST PERIOD.—"Oh! my dear, I am the happiest woman in the world; Adolphe has just invested in a magnificent enterprise! I am to have a carriage, oh! much handsomer than Madame de Fischtaminel's: hers is out of style; mine will have fringed

curtains. My horses will be mouse-gray, hers are sorrels, common as six-liard pieces."

"And this enterprise, madame, is—?"

"Oh! superb; the shares are sure to rise; he explained it all to me before he went into it, for Adolphe—Adolphe never does anything without asking my advice."

"You are very fortunate."

"Marriage is intolerable without absolute confidence, and Adolphe tells me everything."

You are the best husband in all Paris, Adolphe, an adorable man, a genius, a noble heart, an angel. So you are petted to an uncomfortable extent. You bless the sacrament of marriage. Caroline extols men—those kings of creation!—women were made for them—man is a generous creature—marriage is the noblest of all institutions.

For three months, six months, Caroline performs the most brilliant solos and concertos on that fascinating phrase: "I shall be rich!—I shall have a thousand francs a month for my dress!—I am going to have a carriage!"

The child is never mentioned, except in discussing the question of the school to which he shall be sent.

SECOND PERIOD.—"Well, my dear love, how does that matter of yours stand?—What has become of it?—How about the investment that was to give me a carriage, etc?—It's high time for that enterprise of yours to come to something?—When will something come of your investment? It is a long

time coming to anything, that business!—When will the affair come to an issue?—Are the shares going up?—You are unique in your capacity for stumbling into enterprises that amount to nothing!"

Some day she asks you:

"Is there really any such thing?"

If you happen to mention the subject, after eight or ten months, she rejoins:

"Ah! that investment of yours!—Is there really any such thing?"

This woman, whom you thought a perfect fool, begins to display an incredible store of intelligence when it is a question of making fun of you. During this period, Caroline maintains a significant silence when your name is mentioned. Or she speaks ill of men in general:

"Men are not what they seem to be: one doesn't learn to know them except by use.—Marriage has its advantages and its drawbacks.—Men do not know how to finish anything."

THIRD PERIOD.—*Catastrophe.*—The magnificent enterprise which was to return you five for one, in which the most careful and the best informed men invested, peers, deputies, bankers,—all of them chevaliers of the Legion of Honor,—that enterprise is in process of liquidation! The most optimistic hope to recover ten per cent. of their investment. You are depressed.

Caroline has often said to you:

"Adolphe, what is the matter?—Adolphe, something is the matter."

At last, you tell Caroline the fatal result; she begins by comforting you.

"A hundred thousand francs thrown away! We must observe the strictest economy now," you say imprudently.

The woman's jesuitism manifests itself at that word economy. The word economy touches the match to the powder.

"Ah! this is what comes of being in business! How, I pray to know, does it happen that *you, who are so prudent,* risked a hundred thousand francs? I was opposed to it, remember! *But* YOU REFUSED TO LISTEN TO ME!"

Once embarked on this subject, the discussion speedily becomes laden with venom.

You are good for nothing—you are incapable—women alone see things in their true light.—You have risked your children's bread—she tried to dissuade you.—You cannot say that you did it for her. Thank God! she has nothing for which to reproach herself. A hundred times a month she alludes to your disaster.—"If monsieur had not sunk his money in so-and-so, I might have this or that. When you think of going into anything again, perhaps you will listen to me!"—Adolphe is accused and convicted of having lost a hundred thousand francs, foolishly, aimlessly, like an idiot, without consulting his wife. Caroline advises her friends not to marry. She complains of the incapacity of men who squander their wives' fortunes. Caroline is vindictive! she is absurd, she is a fiend! Pity

Adolphe! Pity yourselves, O husbands! O bachelors, rejoice and be glad!

Memories and Regrets

You have been married several years, and your love has become so placid that Caroline tries sometimes at night to arouse it by piquant little remarks. You have an indefinable air of calmness and tranquillity which irritates all lawful wives. They detect a sort of insolence in it; they mistake the nonchalance of happiness for the fatuity of certainty, for it never occurs to them that anyone can disdain their inestimable worth: their virtue is furious at being taken at its word.

In this situation, which is the foundation of the language of every marriage, and which every man and wife should take into their calculations, no husband dares say that he is tired of eel-pie; but his appetite certainly feels the need of the condiments of the toilet, thoughts of absence, the spur of a supposed rivalry.

However, you walk out very comfortably with your wife on your arm, without pressing her arm against your sides with the timid and painstaking cohesion of the miser holding his treasure. You look at the curiosities of the boulevards, to right and left, holding your wife with a distraught and relaxed arm as if you were towing a great Norman flat-boat. Come, my friends, be frank! if some admirer, behind your wife, should press against her inadvertently, or purposely, you have no inclination

to inquire into his motives; moreover, no woman takes any pleasure in stirring up a quarrel for such a trifle. Let us admit, further, that this same trifle is exceedingly flattering to you both, is it not?

You have reached that point, but you have gone no further. Meanwhile, you bury in the lowest depths of your heart and your conscience a terrible thought: Caroline has not come up to your expectations, Caroline has faults which remained under water during the high tide of the honeymoon, and which the low tide of the April moon has left bare. You have often run aground on those shoals, your hopes have been wrecked thereon more than once, more than once your desires as an unmarried man—where, oh! where are those days!—have seen their vessels laden with treasures of the imagination go to pieces there. The cream of the cargo has been lost, the ballast of marriage has been saved. Finally, to use a locution of spoken language, when you discuss your marriage with yourself, you say, as you glance at Caroline: *She isn't what I thought.*

Some evening, at a ball, in society, at a friend's house, no matter where, you meet a sublime maiden, beautiful, clever, and amiable; a mind, oh! a celestial mind, and marvellous beauty! She has the unalterable oval-shaped face, the features which are certain to resist for a long while the inroads of time, a noble, dreamy brow. The stranger is wealthy, she is well-informed, she belongs to a great family; wherever she goes, she will be what she should be, she will either shine resplendent or disappear; in

short, she presents, in all her glory, and all her power, the image of the being of whom you have dreamed, of your wife, of her whom you feel that you can love forever: she would always flatter your vanity, she would understand and advance your interests most admirably. She is affectionate, too, and merry, is this maiden who arouses all your noble passions, who kindles your extinct desires!

You glance at Caroline with gloomy despair, and these are the ghosts of thoughts which, with their bat's wings, their vulture's beaks, their moth's bodies, beat against the walls of the palace wherein your brain, kept alight by Desire, glows like a lamp of gold.

FIRST STROPHE.—Ah! why did I marry? ah! what a fatal thought! I allowed myself to be ensnared by a few gold pieces! Alas! it is all over, I can have but one wife. Ah! the Turks are sensible! It is easy to see that the author of the Koran lived in the desert!

SECOND STROPHE.—My wife is ill, sometimes she coughs in the morning. O God, if Thou hast in thy wisdom determined to take Caroline from the world, do it speedily for her happiness and mine. The angel has had her day.

THIRD STROPHE.—Why, I am a monster! Caroline is the mother of my children!

Your wife returns with you in the carriage, and she seems to you a horrible creature; she speaks to you, and you answer in monosyllables. She says: "What's the matter?"—You answer: "Nothing."—

She coughs; you urge her to see the doctor the next day. Medicine has its chances.

FOURTH STROPHE.—I have heard of a doctor, who, being paid a niggardly fee by the heirs of one of his patients, exclaimed very imprudently:

"They shave a thousand crowns off my bill and they owe me forty thousand francs a year!"—Oh! I would not haggle over fees, not I!

"Caroline," you say to her aloud, "you must take care of yourself; draw your shawl tighter, be prudent, my beloved angel."

Your wife is enchanted with you, you seem so intensely solicitous for her. While she is undressing, you lie stretched out on a couch.

When the dress falls, you gaze upon the divine apparition which opens before you the ivory gate of castles in Spain. Bewildering ecstasy! you see the sublime maiden! She is as white as the sail of the galleon that enters Cadiz treasure-laden. She has the marvellous lines which fascinate the covetous merchant. Your wife, happy to be admired, explains your taciturnity to her own satisfaction. You see the sublime maiden with your eyes closed; she monopolizes your thoughts, and you say to yourself:

FIFTH AND LAST STROPHE.—Divine! adorable! Do two such women exist? Rose of the night! Tower of ivory! Celestial virgin! Evening and morning star!

Everyone has his little litanies, you have repeated four.

The next day your wife is fascinating, she has ceased to cough, she needs no doctor; if she dies, she will die of health; you have cursed her four times in the young woman's name, and four times she has blessed you. Caroline does not know that, in the bottom of your heart a little red fish of the crocodile variety is wriggling, confined in conjugal love as the crocodile is confined in a bottle, but without scales.

A few days before, your wife had spoken of you, in equivocal terms, to Madame de Fischtaminel; your fair friend comes to see her, and Caroline proceeds to compromise you by melting glances fixed upon you interminably; she extols you, she boasts of her good fortune.

You leave the house in a frenzy of rage, and you are delighted to meet a friend on the boulevard and exhale your bile.

"My dear fellow, never marry! It is much better to see your heirs carrying off your furniture while you are in the death-agony, it is better to go two hours without drinking, mad with thirst, tortured with talk about your last will by a nurse like her whom Henri Monnier depicts with such cruel accuracy in his terrible painting of a bachelor's last moments! Do not marry under any pretext!"

Luckily, you do not see the sublime maiden again! You are saved from the hell to which criminal thoughts were leading you, you fall back into the purgatory of your conjugal happiness; but you begin to notice Madame de Fischtaminel, whom you adored

from afar, unable to reach her, when you were a bachelor.

OBSERVATION

When you have reached this degree of latitude or longitude in the conjugal ocean, a little chronic, intermittent disease, not unlike the toothache, makes its appearance. You stop me, I see, to ask: "How is the latitude determined in that ocean? How can a husband know that he has reached that nautical point? and can the reefs and shoals be avoided?"

One is as likely to arrive there after ten months of marriage, you understand, as after ten years: it depends on the speed of the vessel, her sail area, the monsoon, the strength of the currents, and, above all, on the composition of the crew. But husbands have this advantage over sailors, that where the latter have only one way of determining their position, husbands have a thousand.

EXAMPLES.—Caroline, your ex-darling, your ex-treasure, having become your wife pure and simple, leans much too heavily on your arm as you walk on the boulevard, or considers it far more distinguished not to take your arm at all;

Or she notices men more or less young, more or less well-dressed, where she used never to see anyone even when the boulevard was black with hats and trampled by more boots than dainty shoes;

Or, when you return home, she says: "No matter, it's only monsieur!" instead of "Ah! it's Adolphe!" which she used to say with a gesture, a glance, an accent which made those people who

admired her devotion think: "There's a happy wife, at last!"—This "Ah! it's Adolphe!" is characteristic of two periods, that during which she is sincere and that during which she is hypocritical. When she says: "No matter, it's only monsieur!" she no longer condescends to act a part;

Or, if you return home a little late,—eleven o'clock or midnight,—she snores!!! a hateful symptom!

Or she puts on her stockings before you.—In English families this happens but once in a *lady's* married life; the next day she starts for the continent with some *captain* or other, and thinks no more about putting on her stockings;

Or—but let us pause here.

This chapter is addressed to sailors or to husbands who are familiar with CHANGES IN THE WEATHER.

The Conjugal Gadfly

Well, under this meridian, which is in close proximity to a tropical sign upon whose name good taste forbids our making a vulgar jest unworthy of this intellectual work, appears a disgusting petty worry, ingeniously denominated the "conjugal gadfly," the most irritating of all bugs,—gnats, mosquitoes, scorpions, and fleas included,—in that no mosquito-net has ever been invented which will keep him off. The gadfly does not sting at once: he begins by buzzing in your ears, and *at first you do not know what it is.*

For instance, Caroline says to you, apropos of nothing, with the most natural air imaginable:

"Madame Deschars wore a beautiful dress yesterday."

"She has good taste," Adolphe replies thoughtlessly.

"She owes it to her husband," rejoins Caroline with a shrug.

"Ah!"

"Yes, a dress that cost four hundred francs! It is of the finest velvet."

"Four hundred francs!" cries Adolphe, assuming the attitude of the Apostle Thomas.

"But there are two extra breadths, and a waist—"

"Monsieur Deschars does a good many things!" says Adolphe, taking refuge in jest.

"All men aren't so attentive," observes Caroline dryly.

"How, attentive?"

"Why, Adolphe—just think of the extra breadths and an extra waist, so that the dress can still be worn when it's no longer in style, décolletée—"

Adolphe says to himself:

"Caroline wants a new dress."

Poor man!

Some time after, Monsieur Deschars has refurnished his wife's bedroom. Then Monsieur Deschars has had his wife's diamonds remounted in the new style. Monsieur Deschars never goes out without his wife, or allows her to go anywhere without offering her his arm.

No matter what you take home to Caroline, it is

never so good as what Monsieur Deschars has taken to his wife. If you indulge in the slightest gesture, the slightest word that seems a little too sharp, if you raise your voice ever so little, you hear this hissing, viperish phrase:

"Monsieur Deschars would not do so! Pray take Monsieur Deschars for a model."

In fact, that imbecile Deschars appears in your household every moment, in connection with every subject.

The sentence: "Tell me if Monsieur Deschars ever allows himself to—" is a veritable sword of Damocles, or, what is worse, a pin; and your self-esteem is the cushion in which your wife constantly sticks it and pulls it out and sticks it in again, on a multitude of unforeseen and diversified pretexts, accompanied, moreover, by the most cajoling terms of endearment and coaxing ways.

Adolphe, stung until he can see that he is all tattooed with stings, ends by doing what is done in skilful police management, in government, in strategy.—See Vauban's work on the attack and defence of fortified towns.—He turns his attention to Madame de Fischtaminel, who is still young and fashionable and slightly coquettish, and places her—the scamp has been contemplating this move for a long time—by way of blister on Caroline's exceedingly sensitive epidermis.

O ye who often exclaim: "I don't know what is the matter with my wife!" you will kiss this page of transcendent philosophy, for herein you will find

the key to the character of all women!—But to know them as well as I know them will not be to know them very well: they do not know themselves! And, as you know, God himself went astray with regard to the only one He ever had to manage, and whom He had taken the trouble to make.

Caroline chooses to sting Adolphe every hour; but this privilege of setting a gadfly upon one's mate from time to time is reserved exclusively for the wife. Adolphe becomes a monster if he incites a single fly to attack his wife. On Caroline's part, it is a fascinating jest, playful badinage to enliven their joint lives, and, above all, dictated by the purest intentions; whereas, on Adolphe's part, it is the fiendish cruelty of a South Sea islander, a failure to understand his wife's heart, and a deliberate purpose to distress her. This is nothing.

"You are very fond of Madame de Fischtaminel, aren't you?" queries Caroline. "What can you possibly find so seductive or original in that spider's wit or manners?"

"But, Caroline—"

"Oh! don't take the trouble to deny your eccentric taste," she says, checking a denial on Adolphe's lips; "I discovered a long while ago that you preferred that lath"—Madame de Fischtaminel is quite thin—"to me. Oh! well, go on—you will soon find out the difference."

Do you understand? You cannot suspect Caroline of having the faintest liking for Monsieur Deschars—a coarse, vulgar, red-faced man, an ex-notary—while

you are in love with Madame de Fischtaminel! And thereupon Caroline—the same Caroline whose innocence has caused you so much discomfort, Caroline who has familiarized herself with the world—becomes clever; you have two gadflies instead of one.

The next day, she asks you, assuming an air of good-fellowship:

"How do you get on with Madame de Fischtaminel?"

When you go out, she says:

"Go, my dear, go and take the *waters!*"

For, in their anger against a rival, all women, even duchesses, resort to invective and stoop as low as the metaphors of the market; they make a weapon of everything.

To attempt to convict Caroline of an error and prove to her that Madame de Fischtaminel is indifferent to you, would cost you too dear. That is a folly of which no intelligent man is guilty in his household: by doing so he loses his power and dulls his teeth.

Oh! Adolphe, you have arrived at the season so ingeniously called the *Indian Summer of Marriage.* Alas! You must—delightful task!—reconquer your wife, your Caroline, take her by the waist anew, and become the best of husbands by trying to divine what pleases her, in order to do her pleasure rather than your own will! That is the only question thenceforth.

PENAL SERVITUDE

Let us start with this, which, in our view, is a familiar truth in a new dress:

AXIOM

Most men always have a little of the intelligence which a difficult situation demands, even when they have not the full measure thereof.

As to husbands who are below their position, it is impossible to give our attention to them: there is no conflict, they simply enter the large class of the *resigned*.

Adolphe then says to himself:

Women are children: offer them a lump of sugar and you can make them dance all the contra-dances that greedy children dance; but you must always have a sweetmeat in your hand, hold it just out of their reach, and—see to it that their taste for sweetmeats does not pass away. Parisian women—Caroline is a Parisian—are exceedingly vain, they are greedy! You can't manage men, you can't make friends, except by approaching them through their vices, by gratifying their passions: my wife is mine!"

After a few days, during which Adolphe has redoubled his attentions to his wife, he speaks to her thus:

"Come, Caroline, let's have a little spree! you must put on your new dress—the one like Madame Deschars's—and we'll go and see some foolish thing or other at the Variétés."

Suggestions of this sort always put lawful wives into the best of humor. And away they go!

Adolphe has ordered a dainty little dinner for two at Borrel's, the *Rocher de Cancale*.

"As we're going to the Variétés, let's dine at the *cabaret!*" cries Adolphe, on the boulevards, as if inspired by a generous impulse.

Caroline, delighted by this simulation of forbidden pleasures, enters a small salon, where she finds the cloth laid and the coquettish little appointments provided by Borrel for persons wealthy enough to hire apartments intended for the great ones of the earth, who condescend to be small for the moment.

Women eat little at a formal dinner-party: their secret harness embarrasses them, they are dressed in their show garments, they are in the presence of women whose eyes and tongues are equally redoubtable. They love, not good cheer, but dainty cheer: to suck crabs' claws, nibble at quail *au gratin*, twist the wing of a woodcock, and to begin with a bit of fresh fish, seasoned with one of those sauces which are the glory of French cooking. France reigns by taste in everything: patterns, styles, etc. The sauce is the triumph of taste in cooking. Grisettes, bourgeoises, and duchesses alike are delighted with a nice little dinner, washed down with exquisite wines, partaken of sparingly, and ended with such fruit as Paris alone knows, especially when the little dinner in question is to be digested at the play, in a comfortable box, listening to nonsense—that which is delivered on the stage and that which is whispered in their ears to interpret that on the stage. But the bill at the restaurant is a hundred francs, the box costs

thirty, and the carriages, fresh gloves, bouquets, etc., as much more. The cost of this little spree amounts to one hundred and sixty francs, something like four thousand francs a month, if one goes often to the Opéra-Comique, the Italiens, and the Grand Opéra. Four thousand francs a month represents a principal of two millions. But *conjugal honor* is worth it.

Caroline says things to her friends which she considers exceedingly flattering, but which cause an intelligent husband to make a wry face.

"Adolphe has been charming for some time past. I don't know what I have done to deserve such gracious attentions, but he fairly overwhelms me. He adds to the value of everything by the delicacy which makes such an impression on us women. After taking me to the *Rocher de Cancale* on Monday, he insisted that the cooking at Véry's was as good as at Borrel's, and he repeated the party I told you about, and at dessert presented me with a ticket for a box at the Opéra. They gave *Wilhelm Tell*, which, as you know, is my passion."

"You are very fortunate," replies Madame Deschars, dryly, and with evident jealousy.

"But a wife who performs her duties faithfully deserves to be fortunate, it seems to me—"

When that shocking phrase comes to a married woman's lips, it is clear that she *does her duty*, schoolboy fashion, for the reward which she expects. At school, the aim is to earn exemptions for the future; in marriage, to obtain a shawl or a jewel. Love is not involved, therefore!

"For my part, my dear,"—Madame Deschars is nettled,—"I am reasonable. Deschars used to do those foolish things,* but I put a stop to it. You see, my love, we have two children, and I confess that a hundred or two hundred francs are of some importance to me, the mother of a family."

"But, madame," said Madame de Fischtaminel, "it's much better that our husbands should go on a little spree with us than—"

"Deschars!" says Madame Deschars abruptly, rising and bowing.

The Sieur Deschars—a man who is blotted out by his wife—failed to hear the end of that sentence, which would have taught him that some men waste their substance with *eccentric* women.

Caroline, flattered in all her little vanities, plunges headlong into all the delights of pride and gluttony, two fascinating capital sins. Adolphe regains some ground; but, alas!—this reflection is worth many a Lenten sermon!—sin, like every sort of pleasure, contains its thorn. Like an autocrat, Vice disregards a thousand sweet flatteries in presence of a single roseleaf which pricks it. With Vice, man must go on and on, *crescendo*—and forever.

AXIOM

Vice, Courtiers, Misfortune, and Love know no tense but the *present*.

* A lie, involving three deadly sins,—falsehood, pride, envy,—in which devotees indulge; for Madame Deschars is an atrabilious devotee; she never misses a service at Saint-Roch, *since she took up a collection with the queen.*—AUTHOR'S NOTE.

After a certain time, difficult to estimate, Caroline looks at herself in the mirror, at dessert, and sees pimples glowing on her cheek-bones and on the pure alæ of her nose. She is cross at the play, and you, Adolphe, with your head proudly erect on your white cravat, and your backbone straight like a man satisfied with himself—you do not know why she is cross.

A few days later, the dressmaker arrives, she tries on a dress, she puts forth all her strength but cannot succeed in buttoning it. They call the lady's-maid. After a force equivalent to two horse-power has been exerted, verily a thirteenth labor of Hercules, there is still a gap of two inches. The pitiless dressmaker cannot conceal from Caroline the fact that her figure has changed. Caroline, the ethereal Caroline, threatens to be like Madame Deschars. In vulgar parlance, she is thickening up. Caroline is crushed.

"What! am I to have cascades of flesh *à la* Rubens, like that fat old Madame Deschars? And it is true," she says to herself, "Adolphe is a deep villain. I see, he proposes to make me a Mère Gigogne, and rob me of all my charms!"

Thereafter, Caroline is still willing to go to the Italiens, she gladly accepts a third of a box there, but she considers it *very distinguished* to eat little, and she declines her husband's little dinner-parties.

"My dear," she says, "a *comme il faut* woman oughtn't to go there so often. One goes to those shops once in a while, as a joke; but when it comes to making a practice of it—fie!"

Borrel and Véry, those celebrities of the oven, lose a thousand francs a day by having no private entrance for carriages. If a carriage could glide in under one porte-cochère and out by another, depositing a woman at the foot of an elegant staircase, how many customers of the gentler sex would be brought them by honest, vulgar, and wealthy clients!

AXIOM

Coquetry kills gluttony.

Caroline soon has her fill of the theatre, and the devil alone can tell the cause of her disgust. Excuse Adolphe! a husband is not the devil.

A good third of Parisian women are bored at the play. Aside from an occasional escapade, how can they be expected to go and laugh and nibble at the fruit of an indecent thought—inhale the capsicum of a vulgar melodrama—go into ecstasies over scenery, etc.? Many of them have their ears surfeited with music and go to the Italiens only on account of the male singers, or if you prefer, to observe the differences in their methods of execution. This is what supports the theatres: the women are a play in themselves, before and after the performance. Vanity alone pays the exorbitant price of forty francs for three hours of questionable pleasure, enjoyed in a foul atmosphere and at great expense, to say nothing of the colds caught on going out. But to show themselves, to put

themselves on exhibition, to attract the glances of five hundred men!—What a cheap meal! Rabelais would say.

In order to reap this precious harvest garnered by self-esteem, one must be noticed. Now, a woman and her husband attract little notice. Caroline has the annoyance of seeing that the audience is always engrossed by women who are not with their husbands, eccentric women. Now, as the trifling income which she derives from her efforts, her costumes, her poses, hardly pays in her eyes for the fatigue, the expense, and the *ennui*, it is the same ere long with the theatre as with good cheer: rich food made her stout, the theatre makes her yellow.

At this crisis, Adolphe—or any other man in Adolphe's situation—resembles that Languedocian peasant who suffered terribly with an *agacin*—the French word is *cor*,—corn;—but is not the Langue d'oc word prettier? This peasant drove the sharpest stones in the road two inches into his foot, saying to his *agacin*: "*Troun de Diou de bagasse!*—if you make me suffer, I'll pay you back."

"Upon my word," says Adolphe, profoundly disappointed, on the day that he receives from his wife a refusal upon some pretext or other, "I would like to know what will please you."

Caroline looks at her husband from the height of her grandeur, and says to him, after a pause worthy of an actress:

"I am neither a Strasbourg goose nor a giraffe."

"Well, after all, there are better uses to which one can put four thousand francs a month," rejoins Adolphe.

"What do you mean?"

"If a man presents a fourth of that sum to estimable convicts, young ex-convicts, worthy criminals, he becomes a personage, a man with the Blue Cloak on a small scale!" continues Adolphe, "and then a young wife is proud of her husband."

That speech is the coffin of love! Caroline takes it in very bad part. An explanation ensues. It leads to the innumerable facetiæ of the following chapter, the title of which may well make lovers smile, as well as husbands. If there are yellow rays, why should there not be days of that exceedingly conjugal color?

FORCED SMILES*

Having arrived in these waters, you are treated to the little scenes which, in the grand opera of marriage, represent *intermezzi*, and of which this is a specimen.

You and your wife are alone some evening after dinner, and you have been alone so often that you feel the need of regaling each other with stinging little shafts, like this, which we give as an example:

"Look out for yourself, Caroline," says Adolphe, who has so many useless efforts weighing on his heart, "it seems to me that your nose is getting

* *Les Risettes Jaunes*—literally, yellow smiles.

impertinent enough to blush at home as well as at the restaurant."

"This is not one of your amiable days."

General Rule

No man has discovered the proper method to give friendly advice to any woman, even his own wife.

"What would you have me do, my dear? perhaps you are laced too tight, women sometimes make themselves ill in that way."

As soon as a man has said that to any woman, no matter who she may be, that woman—she knows that corset busks are supple—seizes her corsets at the lower end and raises them, saying, as Caroline does:

"You see, I can put my hand under them! I never lace too tight."

"It must be the stomach, then."

"What has the stomach in common with the nose?"

"The stomach is a centre which communicates with all the organs."

"So the nose is an organ, is it?"

"Yes."

"Your organ doesn't serve you very well just at this moment."—She raises her eyebrows and shrugs her shoulders.—"Tell me! what have I done to you, Adolphe?"

"Why, nothing, I am only joking, but I am unlucky enough not to amuse you," replies Adolphe, with a smile.

"My ill-luck consists in being your wife. Oh! if I were only some other man's!"

"We are agreed in that!"

"If I bore another name, and should say, artlessly, like the coquettes who know how they stand with a man: 'My nose is distressingly red!' looking at myself in the glass with the affected airs of a monkey, you would reply: 'Oh! madame, you slander yourself! In the first place, it isn't noticeable; in the second place, it harmonizes perfectly with your complexion. And then we are all like that after dinner!' and you would start from that to pay me compliments. Do I take pains to tell you that you are growing stout, that your face is the color of a bricklayer's, and that I prefer pale, thin men?"

In London they say: "Do not touch the axe!"—In France, we should say: "Do not touch a woman's nose!"

"And all this for a little excess of natural vermilion!" cries Adolphe. "Charge it to the good Lord, who takes it upon Himself to lay on the color thicker in one place than another, and not to me—who love you, who wish you to be perfect, and who call out to you: 'Beware!'"

"You love me too well, then, for you have been exerting yourself to say disagreeable things to me for some time past, you have been crying me down on the pretence of making me perfect. You thought I was perfect five years ago."

"Why, I think you are more than perfect, you are charming!"

"With too much vermilion?"

Adolphe, detecting a hyperborean expression on his wife's face, goes to her and sits down beside her. Caroline, having no valid excuse for going away, gives a sidelong twist to her skirts, as if to leave a gap between them. Some women accomplish that manœuvre with irritating impertinence; but it has two meanings; it is, in the language of whist, either a *signal for trumps* or a *revoke*. On this occasion, Caroline revokes.

"What's the matter?" says Adolphe.

"Will you have a glass of water and sugar?" inquires Caroline, solicitous for your health, and assuming incidentally her rôle of servant.

"What for?"

"Why, your digestion is not amiable, you must be suffering intensely. Perhaps I had better put a drop of brandy in the sugar and water? The doctor told me it was an excellent remedy."

"How worried you are about my stomach!"

"It is a centre, it communicates with all the organs; it will act on the heart, and thence, perhaps, on the tongue."

Adolphe rises and paces the floor without speaking, but he is thinking of his wife's remarkable advance in wit; he sees that she is increasing every day in force, in acrimony; her skill in teasing and her strategical power in discussion remind him of Charles XII. and the Russians. At this moment, Caroline is engaged in a disquieting sort of pantomime: she looks as if she were ill.

"Are you suffering?" Adolphe asks her, attacked on the spot where women always attack us, on the bump of generosity.

"It makes one ill, after dinner, to see a man walking to and fro like the pendulum of a clock. But that's just like you men: you must always be in motion. What strange creatures you are! Men are more or less mad."

Adolphe takes a seat by the hearth, at the corner opposite that occupied by his wife, and sits there lost in thought: marriage stretches out before him with its vast plains dotted with nettles.

"Well, are you sulky?" says Caroline, after five or ten minutes devoted to watching her husband's face.

"No, I am thinking," Adolphe replies.

"Oh! what an infernal disposition you have!" she retorts, with a shrug. "Is it on account of what I said to you about your stomach, your figure, your digestion? Don't you see that I simply meant to pay you back for your vermilion? You prove that men are as coquettish as women"—Adolphe remains unmoved.—"Do you know I consider it very polite in you to adopt our good qualities!"—Profound silence.—"I say something in jest and you get angry,"—she glances at Adolphe—"for you are angry. I am not like you: I can't endure the idea of having hurt you ever so little! And yet no man would ever have thought of attributing your impertinence to some difficulty in your digestion. It is not my *Dodofe!* it's his ventral region that has grown

big enough to speak. I didn't know you were a ventriloquist, that is all."

Caroline smiles at Adolphe; Adolphe still maintains his stiff reserve.

"No, he won't laugh. And you call this having firmness of character, in your jargon! Oh! how much superior we are to you!"

She goes and sits on Adolphe's knees; he cannot refrain from smiling. That smile, extorted with the assistance of the steam-engine, she has been watching for, in order to make a weapon of it.

"Come, my dear boy, confess your sins!" she says. "Why sulk? For my part, I love you as you are! To my eyes you are as slender as you were when I married you—yes, more slender."

"Caroline, when a man and his wife reach the point of falling out over such trifles,—when they make mutual concessions and do not remain red-hot with anger,—do you know what it means?"

"Well?" said Caroline, disturbed by the dramatic posture assumed by Adolphe.

"They love each other less."

"Oh! you great monster, I understand; you remain angry to make me think that you love me."

Alas! we must confess that Adolphe told the truth in the only way it can be told: he laughed.

"Why did you distress me so?" she said. "Have I done anything wrong? is it not better to explain it to me pleasantly than to say bluntly"—here she raises her voice—"'Your nose is blushing!'—No, that was not right! To gratify you, I will use one

of your fair Fischtaminel's expressions: 'It wasn't *gentlemanly!*'"

Adolphe begins to laugh and pays the price of the reconciliation; but, instead of discovering therein some method of pleasing Caroline and of attaching her more closely to him, he discovers how Caroline attaches him to herself.

NOSOGRAPHY OF THE VILLA

Is it an advantage not to know what one's wife likes, when one is married? Some women—they are occasionally found in the provinces—are innocent enough to make known at once what their wishes are, or what they like. But in Paris almost every woman takes a certain pleasure in seeing a man listening to her heart, her caprices, her desires, three methods of expressing the same thing! and twisting and turning, running to and fro, laboring hard and desperately, like a dog in search of his master.

They call that *being loved*, poor creatures! And many of them say to themselves, like Caroline: "How will he get out of it?"

Adolphe is in the throes. At this juncture, the worthy and excellent Deschars, that model bourgeois husband, invites the Adolphe-Caroline household to be present at the house-warming of a charming little place in the country. It was a bargain which Deschars seized for its foliage, a literary man's foible, a fascinating villa in which an artist buried a hundred thousand francs and which was sold at auction for eleven thousand. Caroline has

some pretty costume to try on, a hat with feathers like a weeping willow; she is ravishingly beautiful in a tilbury. Little Charles is left with his grandmother. The servants are given leave of absence. They start with the smile of a blue sky, flecked with clouds simply to heighten the effect. They inhale the fresh air, and the stout Norman horse, on whom the springtime has an enlivening effect, cuts it at a sharp trot. At last, they reach Marnes, above Ville-d'Avray, where the Descharses strut about in a villa copied from a Florentine villa, and surrounded by Swiss fields, with none of the disadvantages of the Alps.

"*Mon Dieu!* how delightful to have such a country house!" cries Caroline, as they wander through the lovely woods forming the outskirts of Marnes and Ville d'Avray. She is happy through her eyes, as if there were a heart in them!

Caroline, having nobody but Adolphe to take, takes Adolphe, who becomes her Adolphe once more. And she runs like a deer, and is the pretty, artless, adorable little schoolgirl that she used to be! Her braids fall! she takes off her hat and carries it by the ribbons. She is a young girl once more, all pink and white. Her eyes smile, her mouth is a pomegranate endowed with sensitiveness which seems newly acquired.

"Would you like a country house very much, my darling?" says Adolphe, putting his arm around her waist and feeling that she leans upon him as if to demonstrate the flexibility of her figure.

"Oh! are you really going to be such a dear good boy as to buy me one? But no foolish extravagance! Seize an opportunity as the Descharses did."

"To please you, to find out what is likely to please you, is your Adolphe's constant study."

They are alone, they can exchange their loving sentences, tell the beads of their secret endearments.

"Does he really want to please his little girl?" says Caroline, laying her head on Adolphe's shoulder; and he kisses her forehead, thinking: "Thank God! I have her!"

AXIOM

When a husband and wife have each other, the devil alone knows which has the other.

The young couple are charming, and the fat Madame Deschars indulges in a remark that is decidedly equivocal for her, she is so prudish, so strict, so pious.

"The country has the faculty of making husbands agreeable."

Monsieur Deschars suggests an opportunity ripe for seizure. A house at Ville-d'Avray is for sale, for a mere nothing. Now, the country house is a disease peculiar to the inhabitant of Paris. It has its run and its cure. Adolphe is a husband, not a doctor. He purchases the estate and establishes himself there with Caroline, his Caroline once more, his Carola, his white fawn, his priceless treasure, his little girl, etc.

Several alarming symptoms declare themselves

with frightful rapidity: you pay twenty-five centimes for a glass of milk when it is baptized, fifty centimes when it is *anhydrous*, as the chemists say. Meat is cheaper at Paris than at Sèvres, when the quality is considered. Fruit is beyond price. A fine pear costs more in the country than in the garden—anhydrous!—which flourishes in Chevet's shop-window.

Before you can hope to gather fruit on your own premises, where there is naught but a Swiss field surrounded by a few green trees which look as if they were borrowed from the scenery of some comic opera, the most enlightened rural authorities when consulted declare that you will have to spend a great deal of money and—wait five years!—All the market-gardeners in the neighborhood despatch their vegetables to Paris, to the Halle Centrale. Madame Deschars, who plays at the trade of gardener-concierge, avers that the vegetables raised on her land, under her forcing frames, by the liberal use of fertilizers, cost her twice as much as those bought in Paris of a dealer in fruit, who keeps a shop, pays for a license, and whose husband is an elector. Despite the efforts and the promises of the gardener-concierge, the early vegetables in Paris are always a month ahead of those in the country.

From eight o'clock in the evening until eleven, the husband and wife do not know what to do with themselves, their neighbors are so tiresome with their petty interests and the conflicts of self-esteem aroused over nothing at all.

Monsieur Deschars, with the profound skill in calculation which distinguishes an ex-notary, estimates that the cost of his journeys to Paris, added to the interest on the cost of the estate, with the taxes, the assessments, the wages of the concierge and his wife, etc., amounts to a rent of a thousand crowns! He cannot understand how he, an ex-notary, allowed himself to be so taken in! for he has many a time drawn leases for châteaux, with parks and dependencies, at a rent of a thousand crowns.

It is generally agreed in Madame Deschars's salon, that a country house, far from being a joy, is an open sore.

"I don't understand how they can sell a cabbage for five centimes at the Halle, when it has to be watered every morning from the day it is planted till it is cut," says Caroline.

"Why," replies a retired grocer, "the only way to come out whole with an estate in the country, is to stay in the country, to live there, to make yourself a countryman; then everything is changed."

Caroline, on returning home, observes to her poor Adolphe:

"Whatever put it into your head to have a country house? The best part of life in the country is the going to other people's houses."

Adolphe recalls an English proverb which says: "Never take a newspaper, a mistress, or a country house; there are always fools enough who will provide you with them."

"True!" rejoins Adolphe, whom the conjugal gadfly has definitively enlightened concerning feminine logic, "you are right; but what would you have? the boy is thriving wonderfully."

Although Adolphe has grown prudent, this reply arouses Caroline's sensibilities. A mother may well think of her child to the exclusion of every other subject, but she does not like to see him preferred to herself. Madame says nothing; the next day she is bored to death. Adolphe having gone to town on business, she waits for him from five o'clock until seven, then goes with little Charles to the coach to meet him. She talks for three-quarters of an hour about her anxiety. She was afraid when she was going to the coach office. Is it decent that a young woman should be left there, *alone?* She cannot endure this existence.

Thereupon the villa leads to a strange condition of affairs, which deserves a separate chapter.

WORRIES WITHIN WORRIES

AXIOM

Worries make parentheses.

EXAMPLE

Much has been said and written, always in a denunciatory vein, of the "stitch in the side;" but that is nothing, compared to the "stitch" with which we are now concerned, and which the pleasures

of the aftermath of marriage cause to start up on every occasion, like the hammer of a piano-key. This constitutes a most irritating worry, which flourishes only at the moment when the timidity of the young wife has given place to that fatal equality of privileges which devours the family and France alike. To each season its worry!

Caroline, after a week during which she has made a note of monsieur's absences, finds that he passes seven hours of each day away from her. One day, Adolphe, returning home as merry as an actor who has been warmly applauded, finds on Caroline's face a thin coat of white frost. When she is certain that her frigid manner has been observed, she assumes a falsely amiable air which is well known to most men and possesses the faculty of making them swear internally, and says:

"Have you had a great deal of business to-day, my dear?"

"Yes, a great deal."

"You rode about in cabriolets?"

"I spent seven francs in that way."

"Did you find everybody you wished to see?"

"Yes, everybody with whom I had appointments."

"When did you write to them, pray? The ink is all dry in your inkstand; it's like lacquer; I had occasion to use it and I spent a whole hour adding water to it before I succeeded in making a sort of thick mud with which to mark some bundles for India."

At this point, every husband glances slyly at his better half.

"I probably wrote to them from Paris."

"What is this business, Adolphe?"

"Why, don't you know? Do you really wish me to tell you?—In the first place, there's the Chaumontel matter."

"I thought Monsieur Chaumontel was in Switzerland."

"But hasn't he representatives here, his solicitor?"

"Were you really attending to business all the time?" says Caroline, interrupting him.

Thereupon she sends a piercing glance unexpectedly into her husband's eyes: a sword-thrust in a heart.

"What do you suppose I have been doing—counterfeiting, running into debt, making tapestry?"

"I have no idea. In the first place, I can never guess anything! You have told me that a hundred times; I am too stupid."

"There! you take an affectionate remark in bad part. That's just like a woman."

"Did you finally settle any of your business?"

"No, nothing."

"How many people have you seen?"

"Eleven, not counting those who were walking on the boulevards."

"How you answer me!"

"Well! you question me as if you had performed the duties of examining magistrate for ten years."

"Come, tell me all about your day, that will entertain me. You ought to think a little about my pleasure! I am horribly bored when you leave me all alone here for whole days at a time."

"So you want me to amuse you by telling you about my business?"

"There was a time when you used to tell me everything."—This friendly little rebuke disguises Caroline's desire to be fully enlightened upon the momentous matters as to which Adolphe is deceiving her. Adolphe undertakes thereupon to describe his day. Caroline affects a sort of abstraction, exceedingly well feigned, to make him think that she is not listening.

"Why, you told me just now," she cries, just as Adolphe is getting out of his depth, "that you spent seven francs for *cabriolets*, and now you talk about a *fiacre!* You took it by the hour, no doubt? So you went about your business in a fiacre, did you?" she says, in a bantering tone.

"Why should I not be allowed to ride in a fiacre?" queries Adolphe, resuming his narrative.

"You haven't been to Madame de Fischtaminel's?" she says, interrupting him ruthlessly in the midst of an exceedingly involved explanation.

"Why should I go there?"

"It would have pleased me; I should like to know if her salon is finished."

"It is!"

"Ah! so you have been there?"

"No, her upholsterer told me."

"You know her upholsterer?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"Braschon."

"So you met the upholsterer?"

"Yes."

"But you told me that you rode everywhere."

"But, my child, if one wishes to take a cab, one must go and find—"

"Nonsense! you must have found him in the cab."

"Whom?"

"Why, the salon—or—Braschon! one's as probable as the other."

"In Heaven's name, won't you listen to me?" cries Adolphe, thinking that he will lull Caroline's suspicions to sleep with a long story.

"I have listened to you too long. Come, you have been lying for an hour like a commercial traveller."

"I won't say another word."

"I know enough, I know all that I wanted to know. Oh! yes, you tell me that you have seen solicitors, notaries, bankers: you haven't seen any of those people! If I should go and call on Madame de Fischtaminel to-morrow, do you know what she would tell me?"

At this point, Caroline watches Adolphe closely; but Adolphe affects a deceitful calmness, in the midst of which Caroline throws out a line to fish for proofs.

"Well, she would tell me that she had the pleasure of seeing you—*Mon Dieu!* what unfortunate creatures we are! We are never able to know what you are doing. We are closely confined at home, by our household duties, while you are about your business! Fine business!—Under such circumstances, I could make up a much straighter story than yours! Ah!—you teach us some fine lessons! They say that women are perverse—but who has perverted them?"

Here Adolphe tries to check this flow of words, by fixing his eyes on Caroline's face. Caroline, like a horse on receiving a blow with the whip, continues more volubly than ever, with the animation of a Rossinian *coda*.

"Oh! it's a very pretty scheme! to plant your wife in the country so that you are free to pass the day in Paris as you choose. So that's the explanation of your passion for a house in the country, is it? And I, poor gull, stepped right into the trap! But you are right, monsieur, a country house is very convenient; it may serve two ends! Madame may avail herself of it as well as monsieur. To you Paris and its cabs! to me the forest and its shady nooks!—Really, Adolphe, that suits me nicely; let's not quarrel any more—"

And Adolphe listens to a succession of sarcastic remarks for an hour.

"Have you finished, my dear?" he asks, seizing a moment when she shakes her head to emphasize a question.

Thereupon Caroline concludes, crying:

"I have had quite enough of the country house, and I'll never set foot in it again!—But I know what will happen: you will keep it, of course, and leave me in Paris. Even so, in Paris I can at least amuse myself while you are taking Madame de Fischtaminel to walk in the woods. What does a *villa Adolphini* amount to where one is nauseated after walking six times around the field? where a lot of chair-rungs and broomsticks have been planted on the pretext of providing shade? It's like being in an oven: the walls are six inches thick! And monsieur is away seven hours out of the twelve during the day! There's your villa in a nutshell!"

"Listen to me, Caroline!"

"Yes," she rejoins, "if you choose to tell me what you have been doing to-day. I tell you, you don't know me; tell me, I'll be a good girl! I forgive you in advance for whatever you have done."

Adolphe has had *entanglements* before his marriage; he knows the sure result of a confession too well to make one to his wife, so he replies:

"I will tell you everything."

"That will be good of you. I will love you all the more for it."

"I stayed three hours—"

"I knew it!—at Madame de Fischtaminel's?"

"No, at our notary's, who has found a purchaser for me; but we couldn't agree; he wanted our country house all furnished, and, when I came away, I went to Braschon's to see what we owed him—"

"You have been inventing this fable while I was talking!—Come, look me in the face!—I will go and see Braschon to-morrow."

Adolphe cannot repress a nervous contraction.

"You can't help laughing, you see, you old monster!"

"I am laughing at your obstinacy."

"I will repair to Madame de Fischtaminel's to-morrow."

"All right! go wherever you choose!"

"What brutality!" says Caroline, rising and leaving the room with her handkerchief at her eyes.

The house in the country which Caroline so ardently desired has become a diabolical invention of Adolphe's, a trap into which the doe has fallen.

Since Adolphe has found it impossible to reason with Caroline, he allows her to say what she pleases.

Two months later, he sells for seven thousand francs a villa which has cost him twenty-two thousand! But he has gained the knowledge that the country is not what Caroline likes.

The question is becoming serious: pride, gluttony, two lesser sins have had their day. Nature with its forests, its valleys, the Switzerland of the suburbs of Paris, the artificial rivers have amused Caroline barely six months. Adolphe is tempted to abdicate and assume Caroline's rôle.

The Eighteenth Brumaire of Families

One morning, Adolphe succumbs definitively to the triumphant idea of leaving Caroline to find out

for herself what she desires. He turns over the management of the household to her, saying: "Do what you will."—He substitutes the constitutional form of government for the autocratic, a responsible minister for unfettered conjugal power. This proof of confidence, which she has secretly coveted, is the field-marshal's staff of women. Women are, then, as the saying goes, mistresses of the house.

For a few days thereafter, nothing, not even the memories of the honeymoon, can be compared to Adolphe's happiness. At such times, a wife is all sugar, she is too sweet! She would invent little cares, little attentions, little endearments, cajoleries, and caresses, if all that conjugal confectionery had not existed ever since the days of the earthly paradise. At the end of a month, Adolphe's condition bears some resemblance to that of young children toward the end of the first week of the year. And Caroline begins to say, not in words, but in acts, in grimaces, in expressive pantomime: "One cannot tell what to do to please a man!"

To leave the helm in the hands of one's wife is an exceedingly commonplace idea, which would be far from deserving the triumphant title assigned to this chapter, were it not coupled with the idea of cashiering Caroline. Adolphe is captivated by this thought, which takes possession of him and will always take possession of those who are the victims of any sort of ill-fortune—namely, to ascertain how far trouble can go; to experiment as to how much damage fire will do when it is left to itself,

feeling confident of one's ability to arrest it at will. This curiosity follows us from childhood to the grave. Now, after having his fill of conjugal felicity, Adolphe, who is playing a part at home, passes through the following phases:

FIRST PERIOD.—Everything goes too well. Caroline purchases little account-books in which to set down her expenses, she buys a pretty little desk to keep her money in, she feeds Adolphe extremely well, she is happy in his approbation, she discovers that a multitude of things are needed, it is a point of honor with her to be an incomparable housekeeper. Adolphe, who sets himself up as a censor, cannot find the slightest improvement to suggest.

If he is dressing, everything is at hand. Never, even in Armida's household, was affection more ingeniously displayed than Caroline's. This Phœnix of husbands even finds the caustic renewed on his razor-strop. New trousers straps take the place of the old ones. A buttonhole is never widowed. His linen is looked after as carefully as that of the confessor of a penitent whose sins are venial. His socks are without holes. At table, all his tastes, even his whims, are studied and consulted; he is growing stout! He has ink on his writing-desk, and the sponge is always damp. He can say nothing, not even, like Louis XIV: "I almost had to wait!" And, finally, he is, on all occasions, characterized as *a love of a man*. He is compelled to scold Caroline for forgetting herself; she does not think enough of her own comfort, Caroline records that mild rebuke.

SECOND PERIOD.—The scene changes, at table. Everything is very dear. Vegetables are beyond price. Wood is as high as if it came from Campeachy. And fruit! oh! as to fruit, only princes, great noblemen, and bankers can eat it. Dessert is a cause of bankruptcy. Adolphe often hears Caroline ask Madame Deschars: "How do you manage?"—Conferences are held in your presence as to the way to manage cooks.

A cook, who entered your employ without dresses, without linen, without skill, has come to demand her wages in a dress of blue merino, embellished by an embroidered neckerchief, her ears adorned by a pair of ear-rings containing small pearls, shod in excellent calf-skin shoes which afford a glimpse of a pair of pretty cotton stockings. She has two trunks filled with her effects and her savings-bank book.

Caroline thereupon complains of the lack of morality among the common people; she complains of the shrewdness and knowledge of figures which distinguish domestic servants. She emits from time to time little axiomatic remarks like these: "There are lessons to be taught them!—They who do nothing are the only ones who do everything well."—She has the anxieties of power.—"Ah! men are very fortunate not to have to keep house. Women have the burden of details."

Caroline has debts. But as she does not wish to be put in the wrong, she begins by demonstrating that experience is such a valuable possession that one cannot pay too high a price for it. Adolphe

laughs in his sleeve, anticipating a catastrophe which will restore the power to him.

THIRD PERIOD.—Caroline, fully convinced of the truth that one should eat solely to maintain life, treats Adolphe to the pleasures of a cenobitical table.

Adolphe's socks are full of holes or thick with the parasitic growths of hasty darning, for his wife finds the day too short for all that she wishes to do. He wears braces black from long use. His linen is old and yawns like a concierge or a porte-cochère. When Adolphe is in great haste to conclude some important negotiation, he spends an hour in dressing, having to search for his garments one by one, and to unfold many before he finds one that is fit to wear. But Caroline is very well dressed. Madame has pretty hats, velvet boots, mantles. She has chosen her course, she is managing the family affairs in accordance with this motto: "Well-ordered charity begins at home."—When Adolphe complains of the contrast between his shabbiness and Caroline's splendor, Caroline says:

"Why, you scolded me for buying nothing for myself!"

Thereupon begins an exchange of jests, more or less bitter in tone, between the husband and wife. Caroline makes herself as fascinating as possible one evening, in order to pave the way for a whispered confession of a considerable deficit, precisely as when a minister begins to extol the tax-payers and boasts of the greatness of the country, while

he is giving birth to a little bill asking for a supplementary credit. There is this further similarity, that everything is done in the Chamber, in the case of the government as in the case of the family. The inevitable conclusion is that the constitutional system is infinitely more expensive than the monarchical system. For a nation as for a family, it is the government of the happy medium, of mediocrity, of haggling over trifles, etc.

Adolphe, enlightened by his past worries, awaits an opportunity to explode, and Caroline dozes in deceitful security.

How does the quarrel come about? does one ever know what electric current gave the signal for the avalanche or the revolution? it comes apropos of everything and apropos of nothing. But at last, Adolphe, after a certain time which may be fixed by the ledger of any household, in the midst of a discussion utters this fatal phrase: "Before I was married!"

The period of bachelorhood is to the wife what the phrase: "My poor deceased husband!" is to a widow's second venture. These two blows of the tongue make wounds which never heal perfectly.

And thereupon Adolphe continues in the strain of General Bonaparte addressing the Five Hundred:

"We are sitting on a volcano!—The family is without a head—the hour to adopt a definite course has arrived!—You talk about happiness, Caroline; you have endangered it—you have made it uncertain by your demands, you have violated the Civil

Code by intervening in the discussion of business—you have aimed a blow at conjugal power.—Our internal government must be reformed."

Caroline does not shout like the Five Hundred: "Down with the dictator!"—for one never shouts when one is sure of victory.

"When I was a bachelor, I had none but new stockings! I found a clean napkin at my plate every day! The *restaurateur* robbed me of nothing beyond a fixed sum!—I gave you my cherished liberty! what have you done with it?"

"Am I so very blameworthy, Adolphe, for wishing to save you trouble?" says Caroline, striking an attitude before her husband. "Take back the key to the money-box!—but what will happen?—I am ashamed to say that you will force me to act a part in order to obtain the most essential things. Is that what you desire? to degrade your wife, or to bring two contrary, hostile interests face to face?—"

And that is a perfect definition of marriage in the case of three-fourths of the married people of France.

"Never fear, my dear," continues Caroline, sitting down in her low chair like Marius on the ruins of Carthage, "I will never ask you for anything; I am no beggar! I know what I shall do—you don't know me yet."

"Well, what?" says Adolphe, "can a man never joke or explain himself with you women? What will you do?"

"That doesn't concern you!"

"Pardon, madame, I think it does. My dignity, my honor—"

"Oh! have no fears on that score, monsieur. For your sake more than for my own, I shall be sure to maintain the most profound secrecy."

"Well, tell me! Caroline, my Caroline, what will you do?"

Caroline casts a viperish glance at Adolphe, who recoils and begins to pace the floor.

"Come, what do you intend to do?" he asks, after a silence of infinitely too great length.

"I shall work, monsieur!"

Upon that sublime declaration Adolphe executes a retrograde movement, detecting symptoms of an exasperation laden with gall, and feeling the keen blast of a north wind that had not as yet blown through the nuptial chamber.

The Art of Being a Victim

From and after the eighteenth Brumaire, the vanquished Caroline adopts a fiendish system, the effect of which is to make you regret your victory every hour in the day. She becomes the opposition!—Another triumph of this nature and Adolphe would be haled before the Assize Court, accused of having suffocated his wife between two mattresses, like Shakespeare's Othello. Caroline devises an appearance of martyrdom, and her resignation is overwhelming. On every pretext she crushes Adolphe with an "As you please!" accompanied

by a terrifying sweetness of manner. No elegiac poet could contend with Caroline, who puts forth elegy upon elegy: elegy in acts, elegy in words, smiling elegy, mute elegy, elegy on springs, elegy in gestures; we give a few examples in which all married couples will find reminders of their own experience.

AFTER BREAKFAST.—"Caroline, we are going to the Descharses' to-night, a large party, you know."

"Yes, dear."

AFTER DINNER.—"Well, Caroline, aren't you dressed yet?" says Adolphe, coming out of his dressing-room in magnificent attire.

He sees Caroline clad in a dress such as old habitués of courtrooms wear, a black watered silk with a striped waist. Flowers, artful rather than artificial,* impart a touch of melancholy to a head-dress arranged without taste by her maid. Caroline's hands are already gloved.

"I am ready, my dear."

"And that is what you propose to wear?"

"I have nothing else. A new dress would have cost three hundred francs."

"Why not tell me so?"

"I, hold out my hand to you!—after what has happened!"

"I will go alone," says Adolphe, not choosing to be humiliated in his wife.

* *Plus artificieuses qu' artificielles.*

"I know very well that that just suits you," says Caroline in a sour tone; "one can easily see that by the way you are dressed."

* * *

Eleven persons are in the salon, all invited to dine by Adolphe; Caroline is sitting there as if she, too, had been invited by her husband: she is waiting for dinner to be served.

"Monsieur," says the footman to his master in an undertone, "the cook doesn't know which way to turn."

"Why?"

"Monsieur said nothing to her; she has only two entrées, the beef, a chicken, a salad, and vegetables."

"Haven't you ordered anything, Caroline?"

"Did I know that you were to have company, and, even if I had, can I assume to give orders here? You have relieved me of all anxiety in that respect, and I thank God for it every day."

* * *

Madame de Fischtaminel comes to call on Madame Caroline. She finds her coughing and bending over an embroidery frame.

"Are you embroidering those slippers for your dear Adolphe?"

Adolphe is planted in front of the fire, with his hands under his coat-tails.

"No, madame, but for a dealer who buys them of me; and my labor enables me, like the convicts at the galleys, to indulge in some little luxuries."

Adolphe blushes; he cannot strike his wife, and Madame de Fischtaminel glances at him with an expression which seems to ask: "What does this mean?"

"You cough a great deal, my dear love!" says Madame de Fischtaminel.

"Oh! what charm is there in life for me?" rejoins Caroline.

* * *

Caroline is sitting on her sofa with one of your friends of her own sex, by whose good opinion you set great store. From the window-recess where you are talking with a number of men, you hear, simply by watching Caroline's lips, the words: "Monsieur wished it to be so!" uttered with the air of a young Roman matron going to the circus. Deeply humiliated in all your little vanities, you try to attend to that conversation while listening to your guests; whereupon you make replies which call forth the question: "What are you thinking about?" for you lose the thread of the conversation, and stamp your feet, thinking: "What is she saying about me?"

* * *

Adolphe is dining with the Descharses—a party of twelve—and Caroline is seated beside a dapper young man named Ferdinand, Adolphe's cousin.

Between the first and second courses the subject of conjugal happiness is broached.

"There is nothing easier than for a wife to be happy," says Caroline, in reply to a woman who has been complaining.

"Tell us your secret, madame," says Monsieur de Fischtaminel affably.

"A woman has simply to keep from meddling in anything, to look upon herself as the first servant of the family or as a slave of whom the master has charge, to have no will of her own, to make no remarks: then, all goes well."

This broadside, discharged in a bitter tone and accompanied by sobs, terrifies Adolphe, who gazes fixedly at his wife.

"You forget, madame, the happiness of explaining your happiness," he retorts, darting a glance at her worthy of a tyrant of melodrama.

Satisfied to have exhibited herself in the light of one hounded to death, or on the point of being, Caroline averts her face, furtively wipes away a tear, and says:

"One does not explain happiness."

The incident has no sequel, as they say in the Chamber, but Ferdinand looks upon his cousin as an angel led to the sacrifice.

* * *

Someone mentions the shocking number of victims of gastritis and of nameless diseases of which young women die.

"They are too fortunate," says Caroline, with the air of one arranging the order of exercises for her funeral.

* * *

Adolphe's mother-in-law comes to see her daughter. Caroline speaks of "Monsieur's salon!—Monsieur's bedroom!"—Everything, in her mouth, is monsieur's.

"Well, well! what's the matter, my children?" inquires the mother-in-law; "one would think that you were at daggers drawn!"

"*Mon Dieu!*" says Adolphe, "the matter is that Caroline had the management of the house and she couldn't make it work."

"Did she run into debt?"

"Yes, dear mamma."

"Look you, Adolphe," says the mother-in-law, having waited until her daughter had left her alone with her son-in-law, "would you prefer that my daughter should be beautifully dressed, that everything should run smoothly in your house, and that it should cost you nothing?"

Try to imagine Adolphe's face as he listens to this *declaration of the rights of woman!*

* * *

Caroline exchanges her wretched costume for a gorgeous one. She is at the Descharses'; everybody compliments her on her taste, on the richness of the materials of her dress, on her lace and her jewels.

"Ah! you have a charming husband!" says Madame Deschars.

Adolphe inflates his chest and glances at Caroline.

"My husband, madame? I thank God that I cost monsieur nothing! All this comes from my mother."

Adolphe turns away abruptly and goes and talks with Madame de Fischtaminel.

After a year of absolute government, Caroline, somewhat softened, says one morning:

"How much did you spend last year, my dear?"

"I don't know."

"Make up your accounts."

Adolphe finds that he has spent a third more than in Caroline's most expensive year.

"And I have cost you nothing for dresses," she says.

Caroline plays Schubert's melodies. Adolphe keenly enjoys listening to that admirably executed music; he rises and goes to Caroline to compliment her; she bursts into tears.

"What is it, dear?"

"Nothing; I am nervous."

"Why, I didn't know that you had that vice."

"Oh! Adolphe, you don't choose to see anything. Why, look! my rings will hardly stay on my fingers; you no longer love me, I am a burden to you."

She weeps, she will listen to nothing, her tears fall afresh at every word from Adolphe.

"Do you care to resume the management of the house?"

"Ah!" she cries, springing to her feet like a Jack-in-the-box, "you have had enough of your experimenting! Thanks! do I care for money? A strange way to cure a wounded heart! No, leave me."

"Very well, as you please, Caroline."

That "as you please" is the climax of indifference in respect to a lawful wife; and Caroline descries the abyss which she has voluntarily approached.

The Campaign of France

The disasters of 1814 bring distress into all lives. After glorious days, conquests, days when obstacles are transformed into triumphs, the slightest drawbacks become good-fortune, there comes a moment when the brightest ideas become nonsense, when courage leads to destruction, when fortifications are a source of weakness. Conjugal love, which, according to the best authors, is a special variety of love, has, more truly than anything else on earth, its campaign of France, its disastrous 1814. The devil is especially fond of interfering in the affairs of poor, deserted wives, and Caroline comes within that category.

Caroline is dreaming of methods of coaxing her husband back to her. Caroline passes many solitary hours at home, during which her imagination is busily at work. She goes from room to room, sits down, rises, and often stands pensively at her window, looking into the street without seeing anything, her face glued to the window-pane, and feeling as if she were in a desert amid her little cabinets

of curiosities, in her luxuriously furnished apartments.

Now, in Paris, except in the case of those families who occupy a whole house, with courtyard in front and garden behind, all lives are coupled, so to speak. The family on each floor of a house finds another family on the corresponding floor of the house opposite. Each can pry at will into its neighbor's apartments. There is a sort of easement of mutual observation, a common right of visiting which no one can avoid. You rise early in the morning, your neighbor's servant is putting the apartment to rights, leaves the windows open, and the rugs on the window-sill: whereupon you guess an infinite number of things, and the same is true of your neighbor. Thus, within a certain time, you become acquainted with the habits of the pretty, old, young, coquettish, or virtuous woman opposite, or with the whims of the dandy, the devices of the old bachelor, the color of the upholstery, or with the cat of the second or third floor. The most trivial thing becomes an indication and a subject for divination. On the fourth floor, a grisette, taken by surprise, discovers, always too late, like the chaste Suzanne, that she is the victim of the enraptured opera-glass of an old government clerk at eighteen hundred francs, who becomes a criminal without expense. By way of compensation, a handsome supernumerary,* radiant in his nineteen years, appears to a devotee in the simple costume of a man

* That is to say, a government clerk employed on probation, without salary.

shaving. Observation never sleeps, whereas prudence has its moments of forgetfulness. The curtains are not always drawn in time. A woman, just before nightfall, goes to her window to thread a needle, and thereupon the husband opposite contemplates with admiration a Raphaelesque head, which he deems worthy of himself, an imposing National Guardsman under arms. Go through Place Saint-Georges, and you can surprise the secrets of three pretty women, if you have intelligence in your glance.

Oh! blessed private life—whither has it fled? Paris is a city which exhibits itself quasi-nude at every hour of the day, a city essentially wanton and without chastity. A person to lead a virtuous life there, must have an income of a hundred thousand francs. Virtue is more expensive than vice.

Caroline, whose eyes sometimes peer between the protecting muslin curtains which conceal her fireside from the five floors of the house opposite, discovers sooner or later a young couple buried in the joys of the honeymoon, who have recently moved into the first floor directly opposite her windows. She devotes her time to spying of the most provoking sort. The blinds are closed early and opened late. One day, Caroline, who has risen at eight o'clock,—entirely by accident,—sees the lady's-maid preparing a bath or a morning costume, a dainty déshabillé. Caroline sighs. She lies in wait like a hunter: she surprises the young wife, her face illumined with happiness. At last, by dint of watching

that charming household, she sees monsieur and madame open the window and lean on the window-sill, pressing gently against each other, inhaling the evening air. Caroline sets her nerves on edge by following, on the curtains, one evening when they had forgotten to close the blinds, the shadows of the two children, fighting playfully, assuming divers phantasmagorical effects, explicable and inexplicable. Often as the young wife sits waiting for her absent husband, musing in melancholy mood, she hears a horse's step, the wheels of a cab at the end of the street; she jumps from her couch, and it is easy to guess from her movements that she exclaims: "It is he!"

"How they love each other!" says Caroline to herself.

Under the spur of her nervous excitement, Caroline conceives an ingenious scheme: she determines to make use of this conjugal happiness as an irritant to excite Adolphe. It is a depraved idea, an idea worthy of an old man attempting to seduce an innocent girl by obscene pictures or anecdotes; but Caroline's purpose sanctifies her methods!

"Adolphe," she says, "we have a charming neighbor opposite, a little brunette—"

"Yes," says Adolphe, "I know her. She's a friend of Madame de Fischtaminel; Madame Foullepointe, the wife of a note-broker, who's a delightful man, the best of good fellows, and who loves his wife: he is mad over her! See! his study, his offices, his counting-room, are on the courtyard, and

the apartment in front is madame's. I don't know of a happier couple. Foullepointe talks about his good fortune everywhere, even at the Bourse; he makes a nuisance of himself with it."

"Well, do me the favor to introduce me to Monsieur and Madame Foullepointe! Really, I should be overjoyed to know how she goes to work to make her husband love her so dearly. Have they been married long?"

"Just as long as we have—five years."

"Adolphe, dear, I am dying with envy! Oh! do bring us together. Am I as attractive as she?"

"Faith! if I should meet you at the bal de l'Opéra, if you were not my wife, I should hesitate—"

"You are very nice to-day. Don't forget to ask them to dinner next Saturday."

"I will do it this afternoon. Foullepointe and I often meet at the Bourse."

"At all events," says Caroline to herself, "of course this woman will tell me what her modes of procedure are."

Caroline resumes her spying. At about three o'clock, she looks through the flowers in a jardinière which forms a sort of clump of shrubbery at the window, and cries:

"Two genuine turtle-doves!"

For the dinner-party on Saturday, Caroline invites Monsieur and Madame Deschars, the excellent Monsieur de Fischtaminel, in a word, the most virtuous couples of her circle. Everyone is under arms in

Caroline's household: she has ordered the daintiest dinner, she has brought forth the treasures from her linen-chests; she is determined to entertain magnificently the model wife.

"You are about to meet, my dear," says Caroline to Madame Deschars at the moment when all the ladies are looking at one other in silence, "you are about to meet the most charming couple in the world, our neighbors across the way: a fair-haired young man of indescribable charm, and such manners!—a head *à la* Lord Byron, and a genuine Don Juan, but absolutely loyal! he is mad over his wife! The wife, too, is charming, and has discovered the secret of making love endure; so perhaps I shall owe to their example an aftermath of happiness; Adolphe, when he sees them, will blush for his conduct, he—"

Here the servant announces:

"Monsieur and Madame Foullepointe!"

Madame Foullepointe, a pretty brunette, of the real Parisian type, a straight, slender creature with sparkling eyes veiled by long lids, exquisitely dressed, takes a seat on the couch. Caroline courtesies to a stout gentleman with sparse gray hair, who follows this Paris Andalusian, displaying the face and paunch of Silenus, a skull of the hue of fresh butter, a hypocritical, libertine's smile playing upon his heavy lips—in fine, a philosopher! Caroline gazes at this gentleman with an air of amazement.

"Monsieur Foullepointe, my love," says Adolphe, presenting this worthy quinquagenarian.

"I am delighted, madame," says Caroline, assuming an amiable expression, "that you have brought your father-in-law"—profound sensation;—"but your husband will come later, I trust."

"Madame!"

Everybody looks and listens. Adolphe becomes the cynosure of every eye; he is utterly dazed with wonder; he would like to cause Caroline to sink through a trap-door, as on the stage.

"This is Monsieur Foullepointe, my husband," says Madame Foullepointe.

Caroline's face becomes scarlet, as she realizes the *lesson* she has learned, and Adolphe blasts her with a glance of thirty-six candle-power.

"You said he was young and fair," says Madame Deschars in an undertone.

Madame Foullepointe, like a clever woman, gazes audaciously at the cornice.

A month later, Madame Foullepointe and Caroline become intimate. Adolphe, being engrossed by Madame de Fischtaminel, pays no heed to this dangerous friendship, which is certain to bear fruit; for, be assured that—

AXIOM

Women have corrupted more women than men have loved.

THE FUNERAL SOLO

After a certain period, the length of which depends upon the solidity of Caroline's principles, she seems ailing, and when Adolphe, assuming an anxious air, for the sake of appearances, on seeing her stretched

out on a couch like a serpent in the sun, says to her:

"What's the matter, my love? what would you like?"

"I would like to be dead!" she replies.

"A very agreeable and wildly cheerful wish."

"I am not afraid of death, but of suffering."

"That means that I don't make your life happy!—Oh! these women!"

Adolphe paces the salon, talking volubly; but he is brought to an abrupt halt by seeing Caroline busily engaged with her embroidered handkerchief stanching tears which flow with most artistic effect.

"Do you feel ill?"

"I do not feel well."—Silence.—"All that I desire is to know if I may live long enough to see my little girl married, for I know the meaning of the phrase so little understood by young women: *the choice of a husband!* Go and enjoy yourself: a wife who is thinking of the future, a wife who is suffering, is not an entertaining companion; go and enjoy yourself."

"Where do you feel any pain?"

"I am not in pain, my dear, I am wonderfully well, and I need nothing! Really, I feel better.—Go, leave me."

On this first occasion, Adolphe takes his leave, almost depressed.

A week passes during which Caroline orders all her servants to conceal from monsieur her deplorable condition: she is languid, she rings when she is on

the point of fainting, she consumes a large quantity of ether. At last, the servants apprize monsieur of madame's conjugal heroism, and Adolphe stays at home after dinner some evening and sees his wife frantically embracing her little Marie.

"Poor child! the thought of you is the only thing that causes me to regret my future! Oh! my God, what is life?"

"Come, come, my child," says Adolphe, "why make yourself miserable?"

"Oh! I am not miserable!—death doesn't terrify me in the least. I saw a funeral this morning, and it seemed to me that the dead man was very fortunate! How is it that I think of nothing but death? Is it a disease?—It seems to me that I shall die by my own hand."

The more Adolphe tries to comfort Caroline, the more closely Caroline envelops herself in the crêpe of an intense sorrow, accompanied by constant weeping. On this second occasion, Adolphe remains and is horribly bored. Subsequently, at the third attack, emphasized by forced tears, he goes away without a trace of sadness. At last, he becomes surfeited with these everlasting lamentations, these poses of a dying woman, these crocodile tears. And he ends by saying:

"If you are ill, Caroline, you must see a doctor."

"As you please! it will end sooner in that way, I am content. But, bring a celebrated doctor."

At the end of a month, Adolphe, tired of hearing the funereal air which Caroline plays to him in every

key, brings an eminent physician. Physicians in Paris are all bright men, and they are wonderfully expert in conjugal nosography.

"Well, madame," says the eminent man, "how can such a lovely woman dream of being ill?"

"Ah! monsieur, like Père Aubry's nose, I aspire to the tomb."

Caroline, out of consideration for Adolphe, tries to smile.

"Pshaw! but your eyes are bright: they have little need of our infernal drugs."

"Look at them closely, doctor; I am consumed with fever, a slow, imperceptible fever—"

And she fixes the most mischievous of her glances on the illustrious physician, who says to himself:

"What eyes!—Let me see your tongue!" he says aloud.

Caroline shows her kitten's tongue, between two rows of teeth as white as a dog's.

"It is slightly coated at the back; but have you had your breakfast—?" queries the great man, turning to Adolphe.

"Nothing," Caroline replies, "two cups of tea—"

Adolphe and the illustrious doctor look at each other, for the doctor is asking himself which of the two, madame or monsieur, is laughing at him.

"How do you feel?" he asks Caroline, in a grave tone.

"I don't sleep."

"Good!"

"I have no appetite."

"Good!"

"I have pains here."

The doctor looks at the spot indicated by Caroline.

"Very good! we will see about that directly. What else?"

"I have occasional chills."

"Good!"

"I have fits of the blues, I am always thinking of death, I long to commit suicide—"

"Ah! really?"

"Sometimes my cheeks burn like fire; my eyelids constantly quiver."

"Very good: we call that a *trismus*."

The doctor spends a quarter of an hour explaining the nature of the *trismus*, using none but scientific terms, the result being that *trismus* is *trismus;* but he observes with the greatest modesty that, although science knows that *trismus* is *trismus*, it is entirely ignorant of the cause of that nervous affection, which comes and goes, passes away and reappears.

"And," he says, "we have become satisfied that it is purely nervous."

"Is it very dangerous?" inquires Caroline anxiously.

"Not at all. How do you sleep?"

"In a ball."

"Good! On which side?"

"The left."

"Good! how many mattresses have you on your bed?"

"Three."

"Good! is there a spring-mattress?"

"Yes."

"What is it lined with?"

"Horse-hair."

"Good! Walk a step or two away from me. Oh! walk naturally, as if we were not looking at you."

Caroline walks *à la* Essler, swaying from side to side in the most Andalusian way.

"You don't feel any heaviness in your knees?"

"Why—no—" She returns to her seat.—"*Mon Dieu!* now that I think of it—it seems to me that I do."

"Good! Have you been in the house for some time?"

"Oh! yes, monsieur, far too much,—and alone."

"Good, that's what I thought. What do you wear on your head at night?"

"An embroidered cap, and sometimes a silk handkerchief over it."

"And you feel no unusual heat—a little perspiration?"

"I don't see how I can when I am asleep."

"Perhaps you find your cap a little damp over your forehead when you wake?"

"Sometimes."

"Good. Give me your hand."

The doctor draws his watch.

"Did I tell you that I have attacks of vertigo?" asks Caroline.

"Hush!" says the doctor, who is counting the pulse.—"At night?"

"No, in the morning."

"Ah! the deuce! vertigo in the morning," he says, glancing at Adolphe.

"Well, what do you think of madame's condition?" queries Adolphe.

"The Duc de G—— has not gone to London," says the great man, examining Caroline's skin, "and there is much gossip on that account in Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"Do you have patients there?" says Caroline.

"Almost all my patients are there. Why, bless my soul! I have seven to see this morning, some of whom are dangerously ill."

The doctor rises.

"What do you think about my case, monsieur?" Caroline asks him.

"Madame, you require careful, most careful attention; you must take emollients, marsh-mallow water, confine yourself to a light diet, poultry and the like, and take plenty of exercise."

"All that for twenty francs!" says Adolphe, smiling to himself.

The great doctor takes Adolphe by the arm, and leads him from the room. Caroline follows them on tiptoe.

"My dear sir," says the great man, "I have dealt very gently with madame; we must not frighten her, and this is a matter of more importance to you than you think. Do not neglect madame too much; she is of vigorous temperament and in ferociously good health. *All this* reacts on her.

Nature has its laws which, when they are disregarded, compel obedience. Madame may reach a morbid condition which would cause you to repent bitterly your neglect of her. If you love her, love her; if you no longer love her, but care about preserving the life of the mother of your children, the treatment to be adopted is a matter of hygiene, but it can come only from you!"

"How well he understood me!" says Caroline to herself.

She opens the door, and calls after them:

"Doctor, you left no prescription."

The great doctor smiles, and slips into his pocket a twenty-franc piece, leaving Adolphe in the hands of his wife, who takes his arm and asks him:

"What is the truth about my condition?—must I make up my mind to die?"

"Why! he told me that you had too great a supply of health!" cries Adolphe testily.

Caroline goes and weeps upon her couch.

"What's the matter?"

"The same thing that has been the matter for a long while. I am in your way, you no longer love me. I don't want to consult that doctor any more. I don't know why Madame Foullepointe advised me to see him, all he said to me was nonsense!—and I know better than he what I need."

"What do you need?"

"Ingrate, do you ask me?" she says, resting her head on Adolphe's shoulder.

Adolphe, in dismay, says to himself:

"The doctor is right, she may become unhealthily exacting, and then what would become of me?—Here am I, compelled to choose between Caroline's physical mania and some little cousin."

Thereupon Caroline sings one of Schubert's melodies with the nervous excitement of a hypochondriac.

PART SECOND

SECOND PREFACE

If you have been able to understand this book—and we do you infinite honor by the supposition: the most profound author often fails to understand, indeed, one may say never understands, the different meanings of his book, or its bearing, or the good or evil it causes—if, we say, you have paid some heed to these little scenes of conjugal life, you will perhaps have noticed their color—

"What color?" some grocer will ask, no doubt; "books are bound in yellow, blue, russet, pale-green, pearl-gray, or white."

Alas! books have a different color, they are dyed by the author, and some writers borrow their coloring. Some books impart their color to others. Better still. Books are blond or brunette, light-chestnut or red. And they have sex as well. We know masculine books and feminine books, and books which, sad to say, have no sex; which latter, we trust, is not the case with this one, assuming that you do this collection of nosographic topics the honor of calling it a book.

Up to this point all the worries we have cited are worries inflicted by the woman on the man. Thus you have seen only the masculine side of the book.

And if the author really has the sharp hearing which is imputed to him, he has already surprised more than one furious woman's exclamation or declamation:

"He only mentions the worries endured by those men, as if we had not our petty worries as well as they!"

O women! we have heard your cries, for, if you are not always understood, you always succeed in making yourselves heard!

It would be sovereignly unfair, therefore, to lay upon you alone the reproaches which every social being placed under the yoke—*conjugium*—is justified in addressing to that necessary, sacred, useful, eminently preservative institution, which is, at the same time, a little vexatious and galling, and sometimes too easy to bear.

I will go even further! Such partiality would clearly be cretinism.

A man—not a writer, for there are many men in a writer—an author should resemble Janus: he should look backward and forward, make himself a talebearer, lay bare all the aspects of an idea, pass alternately into the minds of Alcestes and of Philinte, refrain from saying everything, yet know everything, never be bored, and—

We will not complete this programme, or we should tell all we know, and that would be a terrible blow to all those who reflect on the condition of literature.

Moreover, an author who takes the floor in person, in the middle of his book produces the effect of the

good man in the *Tableau Parlant*, when he puts his face in the place of the painting. The author does not forget that in the Chamber no one takes the floor *between two votes*. Enough, therefore!

We pass now to the feminine part of the book; for, in order to resemble marriage perfectly, this book must be more or less androgynous.

Husbands in the Second Month

Two young brides, Caroline and Stéphanie, who had been bosom friends at Mademoiselle Mâchefer's boarding-school, one of the most famous educational institutions in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, met at a ball at Madame de Fischtaminel's, and the following conversation took place in a window-recess in the boudoir.

It was so warm that, some time before the two young women went to the window for a breath of the cool evening air, a man had gone thither for the same purpose; he had taken a position in the very corner of the balcony, and, as there were many flowers at the window, the two friends could well believe that they were alone. That man was the author's best friend.

One of the two brides, standing at the corner of the window-recess, kept guard, so to speak, watching the boudoir and the salons. The other had taken her position well within the recess, standing close against the wall to avoid the current of air, tempered though it was by silk and muslin curtains.

The boudoir was deserted, the ball was beginning, and the card-tables were prepared, displaying their green cloths and the cards bestowed in the thin case required by the excise office. The second contra-dance was in progress.

All those who attend balls know that phase of large parties when all the guests have not arrived, but the salons are already full—a phase which causes the mistress of the house a moment's terror. It is, to compare great things with small, a moment similar to that which decides the fate of a battle.

You will understand now how it happens that what should have been a closely-guarded secret is awarded the honor of appearing in print.

"Well, Caroline?"

"Well, Stéphanie?"

"Well?"

"Well?"

A double sigh.

"Have you forgotten our agreement?"

"No."

"Then why haven't you been to see me?"

"I am never left alone, we have barely time to talk a moment here."

"Ah! if my Adolphe should adopt such methods!" cried Caroline.

"You saw Armand and me when he was doing what is called, I don't know why, paying court to me."

"Yes, and I admired him, I thought you were very fortunate, for you possessed your ideal,—a

handsome man, always so well dressed, in yellow gloves, clean shaven, patent-leather boots, clean linen, exquisitely neat, overflowing with little attentions—"

"Go on, go on."

"In a word, a *comme il faut* man; in his speech, he was as soft as a woman, not a trace of abruptness. And such promise of happiness, of freedom! His sentences were veneered with violet-wood. He wrapped his words in shawls and laces. One could hear the tramp of horses and the rumbling of carriages in his most trivial remarks. Your wedding outfit was of a magnificence befitting a millionaire. Armand seemed to me like a velvet husband, like a fur robe trimmed with feathers in which you were about to envelop yourself."

"Caroline, my husband takes snuff!"

"Well, mine smokes."

"But mine takes snuff, my dear, as they say Napoléon used to take it, and I have a perfect horror of snuff; he knew it, the monster, and went without it seven months."

"All men have habits; they absolutely must take something."

"You have no idea of the tortures I endure. In the night, I am awakened with a terrible start by a sneeze. When I am going to sleep, I move my head so that my nose comes in contact with the grains of snuff scattered over the pillow; I inhale them and explode like a mine. It would seem that that villain of an Armand is accustomed to such alarums, for he

never wakes. I find snuff everywhere, and really I didn't mean to marry the excise office."

"What does that little drawback amount to, my dear, if your husband is a good fellow and of an amiable disposition!"

"Ah! but he is as cold as a marble statue, as stiff and formal as an old man, as talkative as a sentinel, and he is one of those men who say 'yes' to everything, but who do only what they choose."

"Say 'no' to him."

"I have tried that."

"Well?"

"Why, he threatened to reduce my allowance by the amount it would cost him to do without me."

"Poor Stéphanie! he is not a man, he's a monster."

"A placid and methodical monster, with a false forelock, who, every night—"

"Every night?"

"Wait a moment!—who takes a glass of water upstairs every night to put seven false teeth in."

"What a delusion and a snare your marriage was! At all events, Armand is rich?"

"Who knows?"

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* I have a feeling that you will very soon become very unhappy—or very happy."

"And you, little one?"

"Oh! thus far I have only one pin that sticks into me; but that is unendurable."

"Poor child! you don't realize your good fortune. Come, tell me what it is!"

At this point, the young woman whispered in so low a tone in the other's ear that it was impossible to hear a single word. The conversation began afresh, or rather ended with a sort of concluding chapter.

"Is your Adolphe jealous?"

"Of whom? We are never apart, and that is a worry, my dear. No one can stand it. I dare not yawn, I am always on the stage in the part of loving wife. It is very tiresome."

"Caroline?"

"Well?"

"What are you going to do, my love?"

"Resign myself. And you?"

"Fight against the excise office."

This petty worry tends to prove that in the matter of personal disillusionments the two sexes can fairly cry quits.

DISAPPOINTED AMBITIONS

I. The Illustrious Chodoreille

A young man has left his native town in the wilds of some department marked by Monsieur Charles Dupin in colors more or less heavily shaded. His vocation is glory, no matter in what form: assume that he is a future painter, novelist, journalist, poet, great statesman.

In order to be perfectly understood, young Adolphe de Chodoreille was determined to make people talk of him, to become famous, to be somebody. These lines are addressed, therefore, to the

great mass of ambitious youths who are transported to Paris by all possible varieties of conveyance, moral or physical, and who rush forth some fine morning with the frantic purpose of overthrowing all existing renowns, of building a pedestal for themselves with the ruins of what they destroy, until disillusionment overtakes them. As it is important to study this normal fact, which characterizes our epoch, let us select from all these individuals the one whom the author has elsewhere denominated a *Provincial Great Man.*

Adolphe realizes that the most admirable profession one can adopt is that which consists in purchasing at a stationer's a bottle of ink, a package of pens, and a ream of demy paper at twelve francs fifty centimes, and in reselling the two thousand small sheets which the ream supplies if each of its sheets be cut in four parts, for something like fifty thousand francs, after writing upon each sheet fifty lines overflowing with style and imagination.

This problem of metamorphosing twelve francs fifty centimes into fifty thousand francs, at the rate of twenty-five centimes per line, tempts many families, which might employ their members to advantage in the provinces, to launch them in the hell of Paris.

The young man who is the object of this exportation always seems in his native town to have as much imagination as the most famous authors. He has always made an excellent record in his studies, he writes very pretty verses, he is esteemed a bright

youth; and, lastly, he is often guilty of a fascinating novelette inserted in the local newspaper, which has aroused the admiration of the department.

As these poor kinsfolk never know what their son has learned with great difficulty in Paris, to wit: That it is very difficult to know the French language thoroughly and become a writer in less than twelve years of herculean labor;—that one must have burrowed deep in social life to be a true novelist, inasmuch as the novel is the private history of nations;—that the great story-tellers—Æsop, Lucian, Boccaccio, Rabelais, Cervantes, Swift, La Fontaine, Lesage, Sterne, Voltaire, Walter Scott, the unknown Arabs of the *Thousand and One Nights*—were all men of genius as well as prodigies of learning.

Their Adolphe serves his literary apprenticeship in divers cafés, becomes a member of the Society of Men of Letters, attacks right and left men of talent who do not read his articles, reverts to milder sentiments on discovering the ill-success of his criticisms, carries novelettes to the newspapers, which toss them back and forth as if upon rackets; and after six years of more or less exhausting toil, and of horrible privations, very expensive to his parents, he attains *a certain position.*

This position is as follows. Thanks to a sort of mutual assurance association maintained by the feeble brethren among themselves, which an ingenious writer has called *good-fellowship*, Adolphe sees his name quoted frequently among the illustrious

names in publishers' announcements perhaps, or in the prospectuses of newspapers about to appear. The publishers print the title of one of his works with this false headline: IN PRESS, which we might call the typographical menagerie of *bears*.* Chodoreille is sometimes mentioned as one of the promising men of the younger literary set.

For eleven years, Adolphe de Chodoreille remains in the ranks of the younger literary set: he grows bald holding his position therein; but he ends by obtaining free admission to the theatres, thanks to some obscure works and to some dramatic criticisms; he tries to pass himself off as a good fellow; and, as he loses his illusions concerning renown, concerning Parisian society, he gains debts and years.

A newspaper *in extremis* asks him for one of his *bears*, corrected by friends, worked over and polished from time to time, smelling of every sort of pomade, in and out of fashion. This book becomes to Adolphe what Corporal Trim's famous cap, which he always keeps in action, is to its owner; for a space of five years *Tout pour une Femme*—its final title—will be one of the most charming books of our time.

After eleven years, Chodoreille is considered to have published some estimable works, five or six

* The name *bear* is given to a play which has been refused at many theatres and is finally performed at a moment when some manager is in need of a bear. This word has necessarily found its way from the slang of the wings into the slang of journalism, and is applied to novels which go the rounds. We should call the one that comes from a publishing house a *white bear*, and all others *black bears*.—AUTHOR'S NOTE.

novels in defunct reviews, women's journals, or periodicals intended for children of tender age.

Moreover, as he is a bachelor, as he owns a black coat and a pair of black cassimere trousers, as he can disguise himself when he chooses as an elegant diplomat, as he does not lack a certain air of intelligence, he is admitted to some salons, more or less literary in their tendencies; he bows to the five or six academicians who have genius, influence, or talent, he is at liberty to call upon two or three of our great poets, he makes free, in the cafés, to call by their first names the two or three justly famous women of our time; he is on the best of terms, too, with the blue-stockings of the second class, who should be called *socks*, and he is at the hand-clasp, glass-of-absinthe stage of intimacy with the shining lights of the petty newspapers.

Such is the experience of mediocrities of all sorts who lack what is called good-luck. This good-luck means strength of will, constant toil, contempt for easily-won renown, vast learning, and the patience which, according to Buffon, is the whole of genius, but which is certainly half of it.

You descry no trace as yet of any petty worry for Caroline. You fancy that this history of five hundred young men engaged at this moment in wearing smooth the pavements of Paris is written by way of warning to the families in our eighty-six departments; but read these two letters exchanged by two friends married under different auspices, and you will understand that it was as necessary as the

narrative of preceding events with which every good melodrama used to begin, and which was called the *avant-scène*.—You will divine the shrewd manœuvres of the Parisian peacock flaunting his tail in his native town, and furbishing with matrimonial subterfuges the rays of his glory, which, like the sun's rays, are hot and brilliant only at great distances.

MADAME CLAIRE DE LA ROULANDIÈRE, *née* JUGAULT, *to* MADAME ADOLPHE DE CHODOREILLE, *née* HEURTAUT

"Viviers.

"You have not written me yet, my dear Caroline, and it is very unkind of you. Was it not the duty of the more fortunate of us to begin, and to console her who remained in the country?

"Since you left for Paris, I have married Monsieur de la Roulandière, president of the court here. You know him and you know whether I am likely to be satisfied, my heart being *saturated* with our ideas. I knew what my fate was to be: I am living with the ex-president, my husband's uncle, and my mother-in-law, who has retained naught but the chilling pride and the strictness of morals of the former parliamentary society of Aix. I am rarely alone, I do not go out except in the company of my mother-in-law or my husband. We receive all the solemn old men in town in the evening. They play whist at two sous a point, and I listen to conversation of this sort:

"'Monsieur Vitremont is dead, he leaves two hundred and eighty thousand francs,' says the deputy king's attorney, a young man of forty-seven, as amusing as the mistral.

"'Are you sure of that?'

"*That* refers to the two hundred and eighty thousand francs. A petty magistrate holds forth, he tells what the investments are, their value is discussed, and the result of the discussion is that, *if there is not two hundred and eighty thousand francs, there will be something very near it.*

"Thereupon there is a general concert of laudation of the deceased, for keeping the provisions under lock and key, for *salting away* his savings, piling sou upon sou, in order, probably, that the whole town and all people who have inheritances in prospect should clap their hands as these people do, crying in admiration:

"'He leaves two hundred and eighty thousand francs!'

"And they all have sick relations, of whom they say:

"'Will he leave anything like so much?'

"And they discuss the *quick* as they have discussed the *dead.*

"They think of nothing but the probabilities of wealth, or the probabilities of a vacancy in the public offices, or the probabilities of good crops.

"When, in our childhood, we watched the pretty little white mice whirling round in their cage in the cobbler's window on Rue Saint-Maclou, could I guess that that was a faithful image of my future?

"To think that I, who flapped my wings more violently than you, whose imagination was more flighty than yours, that I should be like this! I sinned more than you and I am more severely punished. I have bid adieu to my dreams: I am Madame la Présidente, as large as life, and I must resign myself to the prospect of walking arm-in-arm with this tall clown of a Monsieur de la Roulandière for forty years to come, to live meanly in every respect, and to see two bushy eyebrows over two odd eyes in a yellow face, which will never know what a smile is.

"But you, my dear Caroline, who, be it said between ourselves, were in the *great* when I was fluttering about in the *petty*, you who sinned only through pride, at the age of twenty-seven, with a fortune of two hundred thousand francs,—you captivate and take captive a great man, one of the cleverest men in Paris, one of the two men of talent whom our town has produced!—what luck!

"Now, you are in the most brilliant circle in Paris. Thanks to the sublime privileges of genius, you are admitted to all the salons in Faubourg Saint-Germain, are well received there. You enjoy the exquisite boon of being admitted to the society of the two or three illustrious women of our time, where it is said that wit so abounds, where those bright sayings originate which reach our ears like rockets *à la* Congrève. You go to Baron Schinner's, of whom Adolphe used to speak so often, where all the great artists and illustrious foreigners go. In

fact, in a short time you will be one of the queens of Paris, if you choose. You, too, can receive, you will see all the lions and lionesses of literature, society, and the world of finance in your salons, for Adolphe used to talk of his illustrious friends and of his intimacies with the reigning favorites in such terms that I fancy you, fêted yourself and fêting others.

"With your ten thousand francs a year, your Aunt Carabès's inheritance, and the twenty thousand francs your husband earns, you should have a carriage; and as you go to all the theatres without paying, as the newspaper men are the heroes of all the ceremonious functions which are so ruinous to anyone who attempts to follow the stream in Paris, as they are invited out to dinner every day, you should live as if you had an income of sixty thousand francs!—Ah! you are fortunate, indeed! and so you forget me!

"But I understand that you have not a moment to yourself. Your happiness is the cause of your silence, and I forgive you. But some day, if, exhausted by such a merry-go-round of pleasures, you think, as you soar aloft in your grandeur, of your poor Claire, write to me, tell me what it is like to be married to a great man, describe for me the *grandes dames* of Paris, especially those who write. Oh! I would like so much to know *of what they are made;* in short, forget nothing, unless you forget that you are as dearly loved as ever by your poor

"CLAIRE JUGAULT."

MADAME ADOLPHE DE CHODOREILLE *to* MADAME LA PRÉSIDENTE DE LA ROULANDIÈRE, *at Viviers*

"Paris.

"Ah! my dear Claire, if you had known how many little wounds your innocent letter would reopen, I am sure you would not have written it. No friend, nay, no enemy, seeing a woman with a plaster upon innumerable wasp-stings, would tear it all off for the pleasure of counting them.

"I begin by telling you that, for a woman of twenty-seven, with a face that is still passable, but a figure somewhat too much like the Emperor Nicholas for the humble rôle I play, I am happy! For this reason: Adolphe, happy in the disappointments which have fallen upon me like a storm of hail, soothes the wounds of my self-esteem with so much affection, so many little attentions, so many charming things, that most wives, considered as wives, would be glad to find that they had made such fortunate mistakes with regard to the men they had married; but all men of letters,—alas! Adolphe is hardly a man of letters,—who are no less irritable, nervous, changeable, and eccentric than women, do not possess qualities as solid as Adolphe's, and I hope that they are not all as unfortunate as he.

"Alas! you and I love each other dearly enough for me to tell you the truth. I have rescued my husband, my dear, from skilfully concealed misery. Far from earning twenty thousand francs a year, he

has not earned that amount in the whole fifteen years he has passed in Paris. We live in a third-floor apartment on Rue Joubert, which costs us twelve hundred francs, and we have about eight thousand five hundred francs remaining, with which I try to see that we live respectably.

"I bring him good luck: since our marriage, Adolphe has been made manager of a *feuilleton*, and he earns four hundred francs a month in that occupation, which requires but little time. He owed this appointment to an investment we made. We furnished the seventy thousand francs I inherited from my aunt Carabès as security for the paper; they pay us nine per cent. and we have shares besides. Since that transaction, which was concluded about ten months ago, our income has doubled and we are in comfortable circumstances. I have no more reason to complain of my marriage as a money-affair than as an affair of the heart. My self-esteem alone has suffered and my ambition has gone to the bottom. You shall be the first to know all the petty worries by which I have been assailed.

"Adolphe made a great parade before us of the famous Baronne Schinner, so renowned for her wit, her influence, her wealth, and her relations with famous men; I supposed that he was received at her house on a footing of friendship; my husband presents me there, I am received with very decided coolness. I catch a glimpse of salons whose magnificence is alarming, and, instead of receiving a call

from Madame Schinner in return, I receive a card three weeks later at an absurdly impossible hour.

"Soon after my arrival in Paris, I was walking on the boulevard, proud of my anonymous great man by my side; he nudges me with his elbow and says, pointing to a stout, badly-dressed little man who was coming toward us: 'Here comes So-and-So!'—He names one of the seven or eight Frenchmen of European reputation. I prepare my admiring air, and I see Adolphe bow effusively to the genuine great man, who replies with the curt little nod one gives a man with whom one has exchanged only a word or two in ten years. Doubtless Adolphe had solicited a glance for my benefit.

"'Why, doesn't he know you?' I say to my husband.

"'Yes, but he must have taken me for somebody else,' my husband replies.

"So it is with the poets, with the famous musicians, with the statesmen. But by way of compensation, we talk for ten minutes in front of some passage-way with Messieurs Armand du Cantal, Georges Beaunoir, and Félix Verdoret, of whom you never heard. Mesdames Constantine Ramachard, Anaïs Crottat, and Lucienne Vouillon come to see us and threaten me with their *blue* friendship. We entertain at dinner the managers of newspapers unknown in our province. And, lastly, I had the painful pleasure of seeing Adolphe decline an invitation to an evening party to which I was not bidden.

"Ah! my dear, talent is always the rare flower that grows spontaneously and that no hot-house culture can produce. I am laboring under no delusion: Adolphe is a mediocrity, well-known and gauged as such; he has no other chance, as he himself says, than to devote himself to the *utilities* of literature. At Viviers, he seemed to be a bright fellow; but to be a bright man in Paris, one must possess all forms of wit in appallingly large doses.

"I have conceived genuine esteem for Adolphe; for, after some trifling falsehoods, he ended by acknowledging his position, and without humiliating himself beyond all measure, he promised that I should be happy. He hopes to obtain, as so many mediocrities do, some sort of a place, as deputy-librarian or manager of a newspaper. Who knows if we may not procure his election later as Deputy from Viviers?

"We live in obscurity; we have five or six friends of both sexes, who are congenial, and that is the extent of that brilliant existence which you have gilded with all sorts of social splendors!

"From time to time I have to endure some annoyance, I overhear some spiteful remark. For instance, at the Opéra last night, when I was walking in the foyer, I heard Léon de Lora, one of the most malicious of our bright men, say to one of our most famous critics:

"'You will confess, that only a Chodoreille would discover the Carolina — *Caroline* — poplar on the shores of the Rhone!'

"'Bah!' replied the other, 'it has budded.'

"They had heard my husband call me by my first name. And to think that I was considered pretty at Viviers, that I am tall, well-made, and plump enough still to please Adolphe! That is the way I learn that in Paris it is the same with the beauty of provincial women as with the wit of provincial men.

"So, if this is what you wish to know, I am a mere nobody; but if you care to know how far my philosophy extends, why, I am very happy to have found in my false great man an ordinary man.

"Adieu, dear friend. Of us two, as you see, despite my disappointments and the petty worries of my life, I am, none the less, the better mated; Adolphe is young, and he is a delightful man.

"CAROLINE HEURTAUT."

Claire's reply contained the following, among other passages: "I trust that the nameless happiness you enjoy will continue, thanks to your philosophy."—Claire, like all other intimate friends, revenged herself for her marriage with the president upon Adolphe's future.

2. A DIFFERENT VIEW OF THE SAME SUBJECT

(*Letter found in a casket one day when she kept me waiting a long while in her dressing-room, while she was trying to send away an inconvenient friend who did not understand the French method of expressing thoughts by the play of the features and the accent I caught a cold, but I captured this letter.*)

This fatuous memorandum was written on a paper which the notary's clerks deemed of no importance when the inventory was taken of the estate of the late Monsieur Ferdinand de Bourgarel, whom politics, the arts, and love-adventures have recently had occasion to mourn, and in whom the great family of the Borgarellis of Provence has come to an end; for Bourgarel is, as everyone knows, a corruption of Borgarelli, as the French name Girardin is of the Florentine Gherardini.

The intelligent reader will doubtless understand to what period in the lives of Caroline and Adolphe this letter belongs.

"My Dear Friend,

"I thought that I was very fortunate to marry an artist as superior in talent as in his personal qualities, equally great as to character and mind, overflowing with knowledge, and in a fair way to rise by following the public road, without being compelled to resort to the tortuous by-paths of intrigue; but you knew Adolphe, you realized his worth: he loves me, he is a father, I idolize our children. Adolphe is most kind to me, I love him and admire him; but, my dear, in this complete happiness there is a thorn. The roses on which I lie have more than one fold. In a woman's heart, folds speedily become wounds. These wounds soon begin to bleed, the evil spreads, we suffer, suffering arouses thoughts, thoughts swell and change to sentiment. Ah! my dear, it is a cruel thing to say, but you

shall know it—we live by vanity as much as by love. To live by love alone, one must live elsewhere than in Paris. What would it matter to us that we had only a white percale gown, if the man we love did not see other women dressed differently, more stylishly than we, women who inspire ideas by their ways, by a multitude of little things which combine to make great passions? Vanity, my dear, in woman is cousin-german to jealousy, to that grand and noble passion of jealousy which consists in not allowing one's empire to be invaded, in reigning alone in a heart, in passing our lives happily there. And my woman's vanity is suffering. However petty these worries may be, I have learned, unfortunately for myself, that no worries are petty at home. Yes, everything is magnified there by the incessant contact of sensations, desires, ideas. That is the secret of the melancholy in which you surprised me, and which I did not choose to explain. It is one of those matters in which words go too far, and in which writing at least preserves the thought by fixing it. The effects of moral perspective are so different in what is said and what is written! Everything seems so solemn and serious on paper! You no longer dare commit any imprudence. Is it not this fact which makes a treasure of a letter in which one gives free rein to one's sentiments? You must have thought me unhappy, but I am only wounded. You found me alone, sitting by the fire, without Adolphe. I had just put my children to bed; they were asleep. Adolphe, for the tenth

time, was invited to a house where I do not go, where they prefer Adolphe without his wife. There are salons to which he goes without me, just as there are numbers of entertainments to which he is invited without me. If his name were Monsieur de Navarreins, and I were a D'Espard, people would never think of separating us, they would always want us together. His habits are formed, he does not notice this humiliation which weighs upon my heart. Indeed, if he suspected this petty mortification, which I am ashamed of feeling, he would drop society instantly, he would become more impertinent than the men or women who part us are to me. But he would impede his progress, he would make enemies, he would raise obstacles in his own path, by forcing an entrance for me into salons which would thereupon inflict innumerable direct slights upon me. So that I prefer my present sufferings to what would happen to us if he should discover them. Adolphe will succeed! he carries my revenge in his beautiful head, the head of a man of genius. Some day, society shall pay me in full for all these slights. But when?

Perhaps I shall be forty-five. My lovely youth will have passed away in my chimney-corner, with this thought: Adolphe is laughing and enjoying himself, he is with beautiful women, he is striving to make himself agreeable to them, and none of these pleasures come to him from me.

"Perhaps, if this goes on, he will eventually cut loose from me!

"No one endures contempt with impunity, and I feel that I am despised, although I am young, beautiful, and virtuous. And can I prevent my thoughts from taking their course? Can I repress my frenzy at the thought that Adolphe is dining out without me? I do not enjoy his triumphs, I do not hear his profound or witty remarks, addressed to others! I could not be content now with the bourgeois parties from which he rescued me when he found that I was *distinguée*, rich, young, pretty, and clever. That is a misfortune, but it is irreparable.

"However, it is enough that, for some cause, no matter what, I cannot enter a salon, to make me long to go there. Nothing is more consistent with the ways of the human heart. The ancients were very wise to have their *gyneceums*. The collisions between the self-loves of women, produced by the commingling of the sexes, which dates back only four centuries, has cost our generation many unhappy moments and society many bitter discussions.

"Nevertheless, my dear, Adolphe receives a warm welcome when he returns home; but no nature is strong enough to wait with the same fervor time after time. What a day will be the morrow of that when he is less warmly welcomed!

"Do you see how much there is in the fold I mentioned? A fold in the heart is an abyss, like a fold of the earth in the Alps: at a distance, one would never imagine its depth or its extent. So it is between two persons, no matter how closely united they may be. You never suspect the real extent

of your friend's trouble. This seems a trivial matter, and yet life is affected by it in all its length and in all its depth. I have argued with myself; but the more I have argued, the more thoroughly I have convinced myself of the extent of this petty grievance. So I float along with the current of suffering.

"Two voices struggle for the mastery when—luckily, a very rare occurrence—I am alone in my easy-chair, waiting for Adolphe. One, I would wager, comes from Eugène Delacroix's *Faust*, which I have on my table. Mephistopheles speaks, the terrible valet, who guides swords so skilfully; he leaves the engraving and strikes a diabolical attitude in front of me, laughing through the slit which the great painter has drawn under his nose, and glaring at me with that eye from which fall rubies, diamonds, carriages, gold, dresses, crimson silks, and joys innumerable, which make me burn with longing:

"'Aren't you made for society? You are the peer of the loveliest duchesses; your voice is like a siren's, your hands command respect and love! Ah! how beautifully your arm, laden with bracelets, would lie upon a velvet dress! Your lovely locks are chains which would entwine all men; and you could lay all your triumphs at Adolphe's feet, show him your power and never use it! He would then have fears, whereas he now lives in insulting certainty. Come! swallow a few puffs of cold disdain and you will breathe clouds of incense. Dare to reign! What a commonplace

creature you are in your chimney-corner! Sooner or later, the pretty spouse, the beloved wife, will die in her dressing-gown, if you continue to follow this course. Come, and you shall perpetuate your empire by making use of coquetry! Show yourself in salons; and your pretty foot shall trample on the love of your rivals!'

"The other voice comes from my white marble mantel, which rustles like a dress. I fancy that I see a divinely beautiful maiden wreathed with white roses, a green palm-branch in her hand. Two blue eyes smile upon me. The virtuous, simple creature says to me:

"'Stay! be always amiable and make this man happy; that is your mission. Angelic sweetness triumphs over all pain. Faith in themselves has enabled martyrs to gather honey from the glowing braziers of their torturers. Suffer a moment; you will be happy at last.'

"Sometimes, Adolphe comes in at that moment, and I am happy. But, my dear, I have less patience than love; at times, I long to tear in pieces the women who can go everywhere, and whose presence is desired by men and women alike. What profound meaning there is in Molière's line:

"'Society, dear Agnes, is a curious thing!'

Happy Mathilde, you know nothing of this petty worry; you are of gentle birth! You can do much for me. Think about it. I can write to you things

that I dared not say. Your visits do me the greatest good; come often to see your poor

"CAROLINE."

"Well," I said to the clerk, "do you know what this letter was to the late Bourgarel?"

"No."

"A bill of exchange."

Neither the clerk nor his master understood me. Do you understand?

ARTLESS SUFFERINGS

"Yes, my dear, things will happen to you in the marriage state which you little suspect; but other things will happen which you suspect still less. For instance—"

The author—may we say the ingenious author?—who *castigat ridendo mores*, and who has undertaken to describe the *Petty Worries of Conjugal Life*, need not remark that he has here quoted the words of a woman *comme il faut*, and that he does not accept the responsibility for the publication, although he has the most sincere admiration for the charming person to whom he is indebted for his knowledge of this petty worry.

"For instance—" she says.

He deems it necessary, however, to state that the person in question is neither Madame Foullepointe nor Madame de Fischtaminel nor Madame Deschars.

Madame Deschars is too prudish, Madame Foullepointe is too arbitrary in her household, she knows all about it; indeed, what does she not know? she

is amiable, she frequents good society, she holds fast to what is best; her shafts of wit are overlooked as Madame Cornuel's *bons mots* were overlooked under Louis XIV. Many things are overlooked in her favor; there are women who are the spoiled children of public opinion.

As for Madame de Fischtaminel, not only is she a party in the cause, as we shall see in a moment, but, being incapable of indulging in the slightest recrimination, she abstains from words and recriminates by deed.

We give everyone leave to think that the speaker is Caroline, not the silly Caroline of the first years, but Caroline become a woman of thirty.

"For instance, you will have children, please God—"

"Madame," said I, "let us not bring God into this discussion, unless it is merely an allusion—"

"You are an impertinent fellow," she replied, "a lady should not be interrupted."

"When she is talking about children, I agree; but, madame, you should not impose upon the innocence of young women. Mademoiselle is soon to be married, and, if she were to rely upon any intervention on the part of the Supreme Being, she would fall into a very serious error. We should not mislead youth. Mademoiselle has passed the age at which we tell children that the little baby brother was found under a cabbage-leaf."

"You are trying to make me say foolish things," she rejoined, with a smile, showing the loveliest

teeth in the world; "I am not strong enough to contend with you, I beg you to allow me to go on with Joséphine.—What was I saying to you?"

"That if I marry I shall have children," said the young woman.

"Well, I have no desire to paint things in dark colors, but it is extremely likely that each child will cost you a tooth. I lost a tooth with each child."

"Luckily," I said, "in your case, this worry was less than petty, it was infinitesimal"—the teeth were on the side.—"But observe, mademoiselle, that this petty worry is abnormal. Its character depends on the position and condition of the tooth. If your child causes the loss of a tooth, of a decayed tooth, you have the good fortune of having one child more and one bad tooth less. Let us not confound good fortune with worries. Ah! if you should lose one of your beautiful front teeth! And still there are more women than one who would exchange the most magnificent incisor for a stout, bouncing boy."

"Well, well," she rejoined with increased animation, "at the risk of destroying your illusions, my poor child, I propose to tell you about a petty worry, yes, a great one! Oh! it is shameful! I will confine myself to the trivial matters to which monsieur seeks to confine us."

I made a gesture of protest.

"I had been married about two years," she continued, "and I loved my husband; I have retrieved my error now and follow a different line of conduct for his happiness and my own; I can boast to-day of

having one of the happiest homes in Paris. However, my dear, I loved the monster, I could see nobody but him in the whole world. Several times my husband had said to me:

"'My love, young women don't know much about the art of dressing; your mother loved to trick you out with finery, she had her reasons. If you follow my advice, you will take Madame de Fischtaminel for your model—she has excellent taste.'

"I, being one of the good Lord's artless fools, suspected no mischief. One night, on returning from a party, he said to me:

"'Did you notice how Madame de Fischtaminel was dressed?'

"'Yes, not badly.'

"And I said to myself:

"'He is always talking about Madame de Fischtaminel; I must dress exactly like her.'

"I had carefully noticed the material, the cut of the dress, and the arrangement of the smallest accessories. So I was happy enough as I trotted about, moving heaven and earth to procure the same materials. I sent for the same dressmaker.

"'Do you supply Madame de Fischtaminel's dresses?' I asked her.

"'Yes, madame.'

"'Very well, I take you for my dressmaker, but on one condition: you see that I have succeeded in finding some material like that of her dress, and I wish you to make mine exactly like hers.'

"I confess that I did not pay any heed at the

moment to the dressmaker's sly smile; I saw it, however, and later I understood it.

"'So like,' I said to her, 'that one could not tell them apart!'

"Ah!" exclaimed my interlocutor, interrupting herself and looking at me, "you teach us to be like spiders in the midst of their webs, to see everything without seeming to see, to seek the meaning of everything, to study words, gestures, glances! You say: 'Women are very cunning!' Say, rather: 'Men are very false!'

"What careful study, what going and coming, what manœuvring it required to make myself Madame de Fischtaminel's double!—However, those are our battles, my love," she continued, turning to Mademoiselle Joséphine once more. "I could not find a certain little embroidered neckerchief, a perfectly lovely thing! but I finally discovered that it was made expressly for her. I hunted up the woman who made it and told her that I wished to have a neckerchief like Madame de Fischtaminel's. A mere trifle! a hundred and fifty francs. It had been ordered by a gentleman who presented it to Madame de Fischtaminel. My savings went to pay for that. We Parisian women are all held very tightly in check in the matter of dress. There is not a man with an income of a hundred thousand francs whose whist costs him ten thousand francs a year, who does not consider his wife extravagant and look with suspicion on her clothes!"

"'My savings, so be it!' I said to myself.

"I had a little of the pride of a loving woman: I preferred not to mention my new dress to him, I wished to surprise him with it, goose that I was! Oh! how soon you rob us of our blessed idiocy!"

This was said to me, who had robbed the lady of nothing whatever, neither a tooth nor any of the things, named and unnamable, of which one can rob a woman.

"But I must tell you, my dear, that he used to take me to Madame de Fischtaminel's, where I dined quite frequently. I heard that woman saying: 'Why, your wife is very good-looking!'—She adopted a patronizing tone toward me, which I endured; my husband desired me to be as bright as that woman and to attain a position in society as influential as hers. In a word, that phœnix of women was my model, I studied her, I put myself out terribly to avoid being myself. Ah! but that is a poem which can be understood only by us wives!—At last, the day of my triumph arrived. Really, my heart beat fast with joy, I was like a child! I was all that a girl is at twenty-two. My husband was to come and take me for a drive to the Tuileries; he entered the room, I looked at him as joyfully as you please, he noticed nothing—I may admit to-day that that was one of those terrible catastrophes— But no, I will say nothing about it, for monsieur would laugh at me."

Again I protested with a gesture.

"It was," she continued—a woman never really abandons the idea of telling the whole of a story—

"it was like seeing an edifice built by a fairy disappear. Not the slightest sign of surprise. We entered the carriage. Adolphe saw that I was depressed and asked me what the matter was; I answered, as we always answer when our hearts are oppressed by such petty grievances: 'Nothing!' Whereupon he put on his glasses and stared at the people who passed us on the Champs-Elysées; we were to take a turn on the Champs-Elysées before going to the Tuileries. At last, I became impatient, I had a slight touch of fever, and when we returned home, I forced myself to smile.

"'You haven't mentioned my dress!'

"'True, you have a dress almost like Madame de Fischtaminel's.'

"He turned on his heel and left me. The next day, I was slightly sulky, as you can imagine. Just as we finished our breakfast before the fire in my bedroom,—I shall always remember it,—the woman came for the money for the little neckerchief; I paid her; she courtesied to my husband as if she knew him. I ran after her on the pretext of having her give me a receipt, and I said to her:

"'You didn't charge him so much for Madame de Fischtaminel's neckerchief.'

"'I swear to you, madame, that the price was just the same; monsieur didn't haggle.'

"I returned to my room and found my husband looking as foolish as—"

She paused, then continued:

"As a miller who has been made a bishop!

"'I understand, my dear, that I shall never be more than *almost* like Madame de Fischtaminel.'

"'I see that you mean to allude to that neckerchief! Well, yes, I did give it to her on her birthday. Why not? we used to be very good friends—'

"'Ah! so you used to be more intimate than you are to-day?'

"Without answering that question, he said:

"'*But our friendship was purely moral.*'

"He took his hat and went away, leaving me alone to reflect upon that eloquent declaration of the rights of man. He did not return to dinner, and was very late that night. I give you my word that I remained by the fire in my room, weeping like a Magdalen. I give you leave to laugh at me," she said, looking at me, "but I wept, none the less, over my illusions as a young wife, I wept with anger because I had been taken for a dupe. I remembered the dressmaker's smile! Ah! that smile brought to my mind the smiles of many women who smiled to see me, a mere child, at Madame de Fischtaminel's; I wept most sincerely. Up to that time, I had been able to believe in many things which no longer existed so far as my husband was concerned, but which young wives persist in assuming. How many great worries are included in this petty worry! You are coarse creatures! There is not a woman who does not carry delicacy so far as to embroider with the prettiest little lies the veil with which she conceals her past from you, whereas you men— But I had my revenge!"

"Madame," said I, "you are carrying Mademoiselle's education too far."

"True," she said, "I will tell you the rest at some other time."

"So you see, mademoiselle," said I, "you fancy that you are buying a neckerchief, and you find a petty worry about your neck; if somebody else gives it to you—"

"Then it is a great one," said the woman of fashion. "Let us stop here."

The moral of this fable is that one must wear one's neckerchief without thinking too much about it. The prophets of old called this world a vale of sorrow, even in their day. Now, in that day, the Orientals, with the permission of the constituted authorities, had pretty slaves in addition to their wives! What shall we call the valley of the Seine, between Calvaire and Charenton, where the law allows but one lawful wife?

THE AMADIS-OMNIBUS

You will understand that I began to suck the handle of my cane, to consult the cornice, to look at the fire, to examine Caroline's foot, and that I held my ground until the young unmarried woman had left the room.

"You must excuse me," I said; "I have remained under your roof, perhaps against your wish, but your revenge would lose some of its force by being told later; and if it constituted a petty worry for your husband, I have the very

greatest interest in hearing about it, and you know why."

"Ah!" she said, "those words: *It is purely moral!* put forward as an excuse, angered me to the last degree. A great consolation it was to me to know that I was a mere piece of furniture, a thing in his household; that I occupied a place among the kitchen and toilet utensils and the doctor's prescriptions; that conjugal love was on a par with pills to assist digestion, syrup of calves' lights, or white mustard; that Madame de Fischtaminel possessed my husband's heart and admiration, and fascinated his mind, while I was a sort of purely physical necessity! What do you think of a woman reduced so low as to become something like the soup and the boiled beef—without parsley, you understand? Oh! during that evening, I composed a catilinarian oration—"

"Say a philippic."

"I will say whatever you choose, for I was in a frenzy of rage, and I do not remember all that I cried aloud in the desert of my bedroom. Do you imagine that the opinion husbands have of their wives, the rôle they assign to us, is not peculiarly painful to us? Our petty worries are always pregnant with a great wòrry. In fine, my Adolphe needed a lesson. You know the Vicomte de Lustrac, a fanatical adorer of women and music, an epicure, one of those ex-dandies of the Empire who live on their spring crops of triumphs and cultivate themselves with excessive care in the hope of obtaining a second crop?"

"Yes," I replied, "one of those men who encase themselves in steel and whalebone at sixty, who abuse the slenderness of their figure and are capable of giving lessons to the young dandies."

"Monsieur de Lustrac," she continued, "is as selfish as a king, but gallant and pretentious despite his jet-black wig."

"He dyes his whiskers, too. He goes to ten salons in the evening; he's a butterfly."

"He gives excellent dinners and concerts, and takes newly-appeared songstresses under his wing."

"He mistakes activity for pleasure."

"True, but he flies away as fast as he can when grief makes its appearance anywhere. If you are in mourning, he avoids you. If you lie in, he waits until you are up and about before coming to see you: he has a sort of worldly outspokenness and a social intrepidity which deserve admiration."

"But does it not require some courage to be what one is?" I inquired.

"Well," she continued, after this exchange of views, "this young old man, this Amadis-Omnibus, whom we called among ourselves the Chevalier *Petit-Bon-Homme-Vit-Encore*, became the object of my admiration."

"Not without reason! a man capable of making up his figure and winning his triumphs all by himself!"

"I made some of those advances which never compromise a woman; I spoke of the excellent taste of his latest waistcoats and his canes, and he considered me amiable to the last degree. For my

part, I found my chevalier youthful to the last degree; he came to see me; I simpered, I pretended to be unhappy at home, to have grievances. You know what a woman means when she speaks of her grievances, claiming that she is not understood. The old monkey replied much more happily than a young man, but I had great difficulty in restraining my laughter as I listened to him.—'Ah! that is just like these husbands, they are the least politic of all men; they respect their wives, and every wife becomes furious sooner or later because she is respected, and feels that she is entitled to the secret education of which she has an inkling. When you are married, you ought not to live like a little boarding-school miss, etc.'—He twisted himself about, he leaned over me, he was horrible; he looked like a Nuremberg wooden image; he put forward his chin, he put forward his chair, he put forward his hand. In fact, after many marches and countermarches, angelic declarations—"

"Bah!"

"Yes, *Petit-Bon-Homme-Vit-Encore* had abandoned the classicism of his youth for the fashionable romanticism; he talked of the soul, angels, adoration, submission; he turned a deep ethereal blue. He escorted me to the Opéra and put me in my carriage. This old young man went wherever I went, he doubled his stock of waistcoats, he laced tighter than ever, he urged his horse to a gallop to overtake and accompany my carriage to the Bois; he compromised my good name with the charm of a college

student, he was supposed to be mad with love of me; I posed as a cruel fair, but I accepted his arm and his bouquets. People talked about us. I was overjoyed! I soon managed to be surprised by my husband, the viscount sitting on my couch in my boudoir, holding my hands and I listening to him with outward rapture. One can hardly believe how much the longing for revenge enables us to swallow! I seemed to be annoyed at the appearance of my husband, who made a scene as soon as the viscount had gone. 'I assure you, monsieur,' I said to him, after listening to his reproaches, '*it is purely moral!*'—My husband understood, and he went no more to Madame de Fischtaminel's. And I ceased to receive Monsieur de Lustrac."

"But," I said to her, "this Lustrac whom you, in common with many other people, take for a bachelor, is a childless widower."

"Nonsense!"

"No man ever buried his wife deeper; God will hardly find her at the last Judgment. He married before the Revolution, and your *purely moral* reminds me of a remark of his which I must repeat for your benefit. Napoléon appointed Lustrac to an important post in some conquered country: Madame de Lustrac, being neglected by her husband in favor of his official duties, took a private secretary for her private business; but, although the connection was purely moral, she made the mistake of selecting him without notice to her husband. Lustrac encountered this secretary in his wife's bedroom at an

exceedingly early hour in the morning and in an intensely agitated condition, for a warm discussion was in progress. The town asked nothing better than to laugh at its governor, and the episode made such a noise that Lustrac himself applied to the Emperor for his recall. Napoléon was very particular as to the morals of his representatives, and in his view a man should lose caste if his wife betrayed him. You know that the Emperor, among his other unfortunate manias, was determined to elevate the morals of his court and his government. Lustrac's request was granted, therefore, but without compensation. When he returned to Paris, he reappeared in his family mansion, with his wife; he took her into society, a course clearly in conformity with the most exalted aristocratic customs; but there are inquisitive mortals everywhere. People asked the reason of this chivalrous protection.—'So you and Madame de Lustrac have made it up?' someone said to him in the lobby of the Théâtre de l'Impératrice; 'have you forgiven everything? You have done well.'—'Oh!' he replied, with a self-satisfied air, 'I became convinced—' 'Ah! yes, of her innocence; you are within the rules.'—'No, I am sure that it was purely physical.'"

Caroline smiled.

"In the opinion of your humble servant, this great worry was reduced to a very petty one, in that case, as in your own."

"A petty worry!" she cried; "what do you say, in Heaven's name, to the weariness of flirting with a

De Lustrac, of whom I made an enemy? Nonsense! women often pay very dear for the bouquets that are given them and the attentions lavished upon them. Monsieur de Lustrac said of me to Monsieur de Bourgarel:* 'I don't advise you to pay court to that woman, she's too dear.'"

WITHOUT PROFESSION

"Paris, 183—.

"You ask me, dear mamma, if I am happy with my husband. Most assuredly, Monsieur de Fischtaminel was not the man of my dreams. I submitted to your will, as you know. Fortune, that supreme argument, spoke loudly as well. To marry without lowering my social standing, to take for a husband Monsieur le Comte de Fischtaminel, with an income of thirty thousand francs, and to remain in Paris,—those were powerful arguments to use against your poor girl. Moreover, Monsieur de Fischtaminel is a very pretty fellow for a man of thirty-six; he was decorated by Napoléon on the battle-field, he is an ex-colonel, and, except for the Restoration, which retired him on half-pay, he would be a general: those are extenuating circumstances.

"Many women consider that I have made a good match, and I must admit that all the conditions of happiness are present—so far as society goes. But confess that, if you had known of my uncle Cyrus's

* The same Ferdinand de Bourgarel whose loss politics, the arts, and love recently had occasion to deplore, according to the discourse pronounced over his grave by Adolphe.

return and his purpose to make me his heir, you would have given me a chance to choose.

"I have nothing to say against Monsieur de Fischtaminel: he is not a gambler, he doesn't care for women, he is not fond of wine, he has no ruinous hobbies; he possesses, as you said, all the negative qualities which make husbands endurable; but what is the matter with him? The matter is, dear mother, that he has nothing to do. We are together the whole blessed day! Would you believe that the night, when we are closest together, is the time when I am able to be with him least. His slumber is my only refuge, my liberty begins when he falls asleep. This obsession will make me ill. I am never alone. If Monsieur de Fischtaminel were jealous, there would be some hope. Then it would be a battle, a little comedy; but how could the aconite of jealousy have sprouted in his heart? he has never left me since our marriage. He is not ashamed to sprawl on a divan, and there he lies hours at a time.

"Two galley-slaves riveted to the same chain are never bored; they have their escape to plan; but we have no subjects of conversation, we are talked out. He was finally reduced, a short time ago, to talk politics. But politics is exhausted, Napoléon having died, as you know, at Saint Helena, unluckily for me.

"Monsieur de Fischtaminel has a horror of reading. If he sees me with a book in my hand, he will come and ask me ten times in half an hour:

"'Nina, my love, have you finished?'

"I have tried to persuade my innocent persecutor to ride every day, and I have urged what is the supreme consideration with men of forty, his health. But he said that, after passing twelve years in the saddle, he felt the need of repose.

"My husband, dear mother, is a man who absorbs you, he consumes his neighbor's vital fluid, he has a gluttonous *ennui:* he likes to be amused by the people who come to see us, and, after five years of marriage, we no longer have visitors; nobody comes here save people whose designs are clearly adverse to his honor, and who try, without success, to amuse him, in order to win the right to bore his wife.

"Monsieur de Fischtaminel, dear mamma, opens the door of my bedroom or of whatever room I take refuge in, four or five times an hour, and comes to me with an alarmed expression, asking:

"'Well, what are you doing, *ma belle?*'—the term in vogue under the Empire,—not aware of his constant repetition of the question, which seems to me at last like the pint which the executioner used for pouring on the victim in the torture of the water.

"Another deprivation! We cannot take a walk any more. Walking with nothing to talk about, nothing to interest us, is impossible. My husband walks with me for the sake of walking, as if he were alone. I have the fatigue of it without the pleasure.

"From the time we rise till our breakfast, my hands are full with my toilet and my household duties, and that portion of the day is endurable to me; but the hours from breakfast to dinner are like

a pasture to be ploughed, a desert to be crossed. My husband's idleness leaves me not a moment's rest, he drives me wild with his uselessness, his lack of occupation wears me out. His eyes staring into mine every moment force me to keep my eyes lowered. And his monotonous questions: 'What time is it, *ma belle?*—What are you doing?—What are you thinking about?—What do you mean to do to-day?—Where shall we go to-night?—What's the news?—Oh! what weather!—I don't feel very well,' etc., etc.; all these variations on the same theme—the interrogation point—which compose the Fischtaminel repertory, will drive me mad.

"Add to these lead-tipped arrows constantly discharged at me, one last stroke, which will depict my good-fortune, and you will understand my life.

"Monsieur de Fischtaminel, who began as a sub-lieutenant in 1809, at the age of eighteen, has no other education than that due to discipline and to the honorable instincts of the nobleman and the soldier; although he has tact and a sense of probity and subordination, his ignorance is unbounded, he knows absolutely nothing, and he has a horror of learning anything under heaven. Oh! my dear mamma, what an accomplished concierge this colonel would have made if he had been poor! I care nothing for his gallantry; he did not fight against the Russians or the Austrians or the Prussians; he fought against *ennui.* When he rushed upon the enemy, Captain Fischtaminel was obeying an impulse to fly from himself. He married from indolence.

"Another little inconvenience: monsieur torments the servants so that we change them every six months.

"I am so anxious to be a virtuous woman, dear mamma, that I am going to try to travel six months in the year. During the winter, I will go every evening to the Italiens, to the Opéra, into society; but are our means sufficient to permit such an outlay? My uncle Cyrus ought to come to Paris, I would take care of him as of an inheritance.

"If you think of any remedy for my troubles, point it out to your daughter, whose love for you is as great as her unhappiness, and who heartily wishes that her name were something else than—

"NINA FISCHTAMINEL."

In addition to the necessity of describing this petty worry, which could be described only by the hand of a woman,—and such a woman!—it was most essential to make you acquainted with the woman, whom you had previously seen only in profile, in the early part of this book, the queen of the social set in which Caroline lives, the envied woman, the clever woman who speedily succeeded in reconciling her duty to society with the demands of her heart. This letter is her absolution.

INDISCRETIONS

Women are chaste, or vain, or simply proud.—All of them, therefore, are subject to the petty worries next to be described.

Certain husbands are so overjoyed to have a woman to themselves, a chance due solely to legality, that they fear that the public may make a mistake, and hasten to brand their wives as dealers in lumber brand their logs in the stream, or the graziers of Berri their sheep. Before everybody they lavish on their wives, after the Roman fashion,—*columbella*,—pet names taken from the animal kingdom, and call them "my chicken—my cat—my rat—my little rabbit;" or, journeying into the vegetable kingdom, they call them "my cabbage—my fig (only in Provence)—my plum" (only in Alsace)—but never "my flower"—note their discretion;

Or,—and this is a more serious matter,—"*bobonne*—mother—my girl—*bourgeoise*—old lady"—when the woman is very young.

Some venture on pet names of doubtful propriety, such as "*mon bichon—ma niniche—Tronquette.*"

We have heard one of our leading politicians, the one most remarkable for his ugliness, call his wife "*moumoutte.*"

"I should prefer to have him strike me," said the unfortunate creature to her neighbor.

"Poor little woman, she is very unhappy!" said the neighbor, looking at me when Moumoutte had gone; "when she goes out with her husband, she is on thorns all the time, and tries to avoid him. One evening, he actually put his arm round her neck, saying: 'Come, my *grosse!*'"

It is claimed that a very famous case of the poisoning of a husband by arsenic was due to the

constant indiscretions which his wife had to undergo in society. That husband would give the woman he had won at the point of the Code light taps on the shoulders, he would surprise her with a resounding kiss, he would put her to shame by a public caress seasoned with the fatuous vulgarity the secret of which belongs to the French savages who live in the heart of the country districts, and whose manners and morals are still almost unknown, despite the efforts of the naturalist-novelists.

This unbearable condition of affairs, being fully appreciated by an intelligent jury, was responsible, it is said, for a verdict softened by extenuating circumstances.

The jurors said to themselves:

"It is going a little too far to punish these conjugal crimes with death; a woman is very pardonable when she is so tormented!"

We regret beyond measure, in the interest of refined morals, that these arguments are not more generally known. God grant, therefore, that our book may meet with immense success; the women will be the gainers in that they are treated herein as they should be, like queens.

In this respect, love is far superior to marriage; it is proud of its indiscretions, some women invite them, pave the way for them, and woe to the man who does not indulge in a few!

What a world of passion in a stray *thou!*

I have heard—it was in the provinces—a husband call his wife "my berlin." She was delighted with

the name and saw nothing absurd in it; she called him "my sonny!"—And that delightful couple did not know that such things as petty worries existed.

It was while observing this happy household that the author discovered the following

AXIOM

To be happy at home, one must either be a man of genius married to an affectionate and clever woman, or else, by an evil chance which is not so common as you might suppose, both husband and wife must be exceedingly stupid.

The somewhat too celebrated story of the cure by arsenic of a wounded self-esteem proves that, properly speaking, there are no petty worries for the wife in conjugal life.

AXIOM

Woman lives by sentiment where man lives by action.

Now, sentiment may at any moment transform a petty worry into a great disaster, a ruined life, or a never-ending unhappiness.

Suppose that Caroline begins, in her ignorance of life and the world, by talking to her husband of the petty worries of her stupidity:—Read the article entitled *Discoveries* once more.—Adolphe, like all men, has compensations in social activity; he goes and comes, attends to his business. But to Caroline

it is simply a question of loving or not loving, being loved or not being loved.

Indiscretions are in harmony with the character of those who commit them, and with the times and places of their committal. Two examples will suffice.

FIRST EXAMPLE.—A man is naturally ugly and dirty; he has a bad figure and is repulsive. There are men, and rich men too, who, by virtue of a sort of constitutional infirmity as yet unexplained, soil new clothes in twenty-four hours. They were born disgusting. It is so degrading for a woman to be anything more than a nominal wife of an Adolphe of this description, that a certain Caroline had for a long time demanded the suppression of modern forms of endearment and all the insignia of wifely dignity. In five or six years, society had become accustomed to this state of things, and was the more certain that the husband and wife were separated, because the accession of a Ferdinand II. had been noted.

One evening, before ten people, monsieur said to his wife:

"Caroline, pass me the tongs."

That was nothing, and it was everything. It was a domestic revolution.

Monsieur de Lustrac, the Amadis-Omnibus, hurried to Madame de Fischtaminel's and described this little scene as drolly as he could, and Madame de Fischtaminel assumed a little Célimène-like expression as she said:

"Poor woman! to what extremities she is reduced!"

"Pshaw! we shall have the solution of the enigma in eight months," observed an old woman, whose only pleasure in life was to say unkind things.

I say nothing of Caroline's confusion, for you must have divined it.

SECOND EXAMPLE.—Imagine the horrible situation of a refined woman who was chatting pleasantly at her country house, near Paris, surrounded by twelve or fifteen persons, when her husband's valet came and whispered in her ear:

"Monsieur has just arrived, madame."

"Very well, Benoît."

Everybody had heard the rumbling of the carriage. They all knew that monsieur had been in Paris since Monday, and this happened on Saturday at four o'clock.

"He has something urgent to say to madame," adds Benoît.

Although this dialogue was carried on in undertones, it was readily understood by all, as the mistress of the house changed from the color of a Bengal rose to the brilliant scarlet of a poppy. She nodded her head, continued the conversation, and soon left her guests on the pretext of wishing to see if her husband had succeeded in an important enterprise; but she was evidently annoyed by her Adolphe's lack of consideration for the party she was entertaining.

Women during their youth wish to be treated like divinities, they adore the ideal: they cannot endure the thought of being what nature ordains that they shall be.

Some husbands, on their return to the country, do worse: they salute the company, put their arm around their wife's waist, insist upon going to walk with her, make a pretence of talking confidentially, disappear among the trees, wander away, and reappear half an hour later.

These, mesdames, are genuine petty worries for young women; but those who have passed the age of forty find these indiscretions so much to their taste that the most prudish are flattered by them; for,

In their second youth, women wish to be treated like mortals, they love the positive: they cannot endure the thought of ceasing to be what nature has ordained that they shall be.

AXIOM

Modesty is a relative virtue: there is the modesty of twenty years, also the modesty of thirty, and of forty-five years.

The author said to a lady who asked him to guess how old she was:

"You are at the age of indiscretions, madame."

That charming young person of thirty-nine was making a much too public display of a Ferdinand, while her daughter was trying to conceal her Ferdinand I.

BRUTAL REVELATIONS

FIRST VARIETY.—Caroline adores Adolphe;—she deems him handsome—she deems him superb, especially as a National Guard;—she feels a thrill of

pride when a sentinel presents arms to him,—she considers that he is moulded like a model—she considers him bright—all that he does is well done—no one has better taste than Adolphe;—in short, she is mad over Adolphe.

It is the old myth of Love's bandage which turns white every ten years and which custom decorates anew, but which, ever since the days of ancient Greece, is always the same.

Caroline is at a ball, talking with one of her friends of her own sex. A man famous for his bluntness, whom she is destined to know later, but whom she sees now for the first time, Monsieur Foullepointe, comes up and speaks to Caroline's friend. According to the custom of society, Caroline listens to the conversation without taking part in it.

"Pray tell me, madame," says Monsieur Foullepointe, "the name of that amusing gentleman who has just been talking about the Assize Court before Monsieur So-and-So, whose recent acquittal has made so much talk; who goes splashing through the most delicate subjects like a bull through a swamp? Madame So-and-So burst into tears because he told of the death of a little child before her, she having lost one only two months ago."

"Which is he?"

"That stout party, dressed like a waiter in a restaurant, curled like a barber's apprentice—see, the man who is trying to do the amiable with Madame de Fischtaminel."

"Hush, for Heaven's sake!" exclaims the horrified lady in an undertone, "he's the husband of this little woman beside me!"

"Is monsieur your husband?" says Monsieur Foullepointe, "I am charmed with him, madame; he is delightful, he is so energetic and good-humored and bright, I shall hasten to make his acquaintance."

And Foullepointe beats a retreat, leaving in Caroline's mind a poisonous doubt as to *whether her husband is so perfect as she thought.*

SECOND VARIETY.—Caroline, tired of hearing about Madame la Baronne Schinner, who is credited with great epistolary talent and is known as the *Sévigné of the billet-doux;* and about Madame de Fischtaminel, who has ventured to write a small 32mo on the education of young ladies, in which she has gallantly copied Fénelon, minus the style;—Caroline works for six months at a novel ten degrees below Berquin, nauseatingly moral, and written in schoolboy style.

After such intrigues as women can devise in the interest of their self-esteem, intrigues whose tenacity and completeness would make one believe that they have a third sex in their brains, this novel, entitled *Le Mélilot*, appears in three instalments in one of the great daily journals. It is signed: SAMUEL CRUX.

When Adolphe takes up his paper at breakfast, Caroline's heart beats in her throat; she blushes, turns pale, averts her eyes, looks at the cornice. As soon as Adolphe's eyes fall upon the *feuilleton*,

she can no longer contain herself: she rises and disappears; then returns, having collected a store of courage from Heaven knows where.

"Is there a *feuilleton* this morning?" she asks, in a tone which she believes to be indifferent, but which would disturb a husband who was still jealous of his wife.

"Yes, by a beginner, Samuel Crux. Oh! it's a pseudonym; the novel is flat enough to drive the fleas to despair if they could read—and so vulgar!—it's fairly sickening; but it is—"

Caroline breathes again.

"It is—?" she says.

"It is incomprehensible," continues Adolphe. "Someone must have paid Chodoreille something like five or six hundred francs to publish this—or else it's the work of a blue-stocking in the first society, who has promised to receive Madame Chodoreille, or perhaps of some woman in whom the manager is interested.—Such stupidity can be explained in no other way.—Just fancy, Caroline, it's about a little flower gathered in the woods during a sentimental promenade, which a gentleman of the Werther type had sworn to keep, which he has framed, and which he is requested to return eleven years later.—No doubt he has moved three times, poor fellow!—It's a new idea that dates from Sterne and Gessner. What makes me think that the author is a woman is that women's first literary idea always consists in revenging themselves on some one."

Adolphe could continue to tear *Le Mélilot* to tatters at his pleasure. Bells are ringing in Caroline's ears, she is in the position of a woman who has thrown herself off Pont des Arts and is trying to find her way ten feet below the surface of the Seine.

ANOTHER VARIETY.—Caroline has finally discovered, in her paroxysms of jealousy, a hiding-place used by Adolphe, who, being suspicious of his wife, and knowing that she reads his letters, has endeavored to rescue his correspondence with Hector from the hooked fingers of the conjugal police.

Hector is a college friend, married, and living in Loire-Inférieure.

Adolphe raises the cloth of his writing-table, a cloth of red, blue, or black velvet,—the color, as you will see, is of no importance,—with a lace border made by Caroline; and he slips his letters to Madame de Fischtaminel and to his schoolfellow Hector between the table and the cloth.

The thickness of a sheet of paper is a small matter, velvet is a very soft, very discreet material. But these precautions are unavailing. The male devil is matched by the female devil; hell contains all sorts. Caroline has Mephistopheles on her side, the demon who makes fire flash from all tables, who, with his sarcastic finger, points to the hiding-place of keys, the secret of secrets!

Caroline has detected the presence of a sheet of letter-paper between the velvet and the table; she pounces on a letter to Hector, instead of pouncing

on a letter to Madame de Fischtaminel, who is taking the waters at Plombières, and she reads this:

"My Dear Hector:

"I pity you, but you do wisely to confide to me the difficulties in which you have wilfully involved yourself. You were unable to see the difference between the provincial woman and the Parisian. In the provinces, my dear fellow, you are always face to face with your wife, and, spurred on by *ennui*, you throw yourself head foremost into happiness. That is a great mistake: happiness is a deep abyss, and, in marriage, when you have reached the bottom you cannot get out.

"I will tell you why; let me take, on your wife's account, the shortest path, the parabola.*

"I remember making the journey from Paris to Ville-Parisis in a 'bus: distance, seven leagues; conveyance very heavy, drawn by a lame horse; driver, a child of eleven. I was shut up in that draughty box with an old soldier. Nothing entertains me more than to tap and drain everyone I meet, with the aid of the drill called interrogation, and to receive, by means of an attentive and pleased expression, the sum total of information, anecdotes, and general knowledge, of which everyone desires to rid himself; and everyone has his own stock, the peasant as well as the banker, the corporal as well as the Marshal of France.

"I have noticed how ready these casks filled with

* In French, the same word means *parabola* and *parable*.

wit are to empty themselves when they are shipped by diligence or 'bus, by any vehicle drawn by horses, for nobody talks in a railway carriage.

"Judging from the rate of speed at which we left Paris, we were likely to be seven hours on the road: I led the corporal to talk, therefore, for my amusement. He could neither read nor write, all he said was unpublished. Well, the journey seemed very short to me. The corporal had made all sorts of campaigns, he told me some extraordinary facts with which historians never concern themselves.

"Oh! my dear Hector, how practice does run away with theory! Among other things, in response to one of my questions relative to the poor infantry, whose courage is exhibited in marching much more than in fighting, he said this, which I give you stripped of all circumlocution:

"'Monsieur, when they brought me any Parisians in our Forty-fifth, which Napoléon had nicknamed the *Terrible*,—I speak of the early days of the Emperor, when the infantry had legs of steel and needed them,—I had a way of knowing which of them would remain in the Forty-fifth. They were the ones who marched without haste, who did their little six leagues a day, neither more nor less, and reached the camping-place ready to start again the next morning. The swaggering fellows who made ten leagues, who wanted to rush on to victory, stayed behind at the hospital, half-way.'

"The worthy corporal was talking about marriage,

thinking that he was talking about war, and you are at the hospital, half-way to your destination, my dear Hector.

"Remember Madame de Sévigné's lamentations as she counted out a hundred thousand crowns to Monsieur de Grignan, to induce him to marry one of the prettiest women in France:

"'Why,' she said to herself, 'he ought to marry her every day so long as she lives! Decidedly, a hundred thousand crowns is none too much!'

"Is not that enough to make the bravest tremble?

"My dear fellow, conjugal happiness is founded, like the happiness of nations, on ignorance. It is felicity abounding in negative conditions.

"If I am happy with my little Caroline, it is because I observe with the utmost strictness that salutary principle upon which the *Physiology of Marriage* insists so strongly. I have resolved to lead my wife by roads broken out through the snow, until the happy day when infidelity will become very difficult.

"In the situation in which you have placed yourself, and which resembles that of Duprez when, at the time of his first appearance in Paris, he thought best to sing at the top of his lungs, instead of imitating Nourrit, who used just as much volume of voice as he needed to fascinate his audience—this I think is the course you should adopt to—"

The letter was broken off there; Caroline replaces it, thinking how she can make her dear Adolphe

atone for his obedience to the execrable precepts of the *Physiology of Marriage*.

The Drawn Game

This worry must happen so frequently and in such diverse forms in the lives of married women that this individual example will serve as a type of the species.

The Caroline with whom we here have to do is very pious; she is very fond of her husband, indeed her husband claims that she loves him much too dearly; but that is marital conceit, if, indeed, it is not a challenge: he never complains except to his wife's young lady friends.

When the Catholic conscience is at stake, everything assumes an exceedingly grave aspect. Madame de —— has said to her young friend Madame de Fischtaminel, that she had been compelled to make an extraordinary confession to her spiritual director, and to do penance, her confessor having decided that she was in a state of mortal sin. This lady, who hears mass every morning, is about thirty-six years of age, thin and slightly pimpled. She has great velvety black eyes and a dark line on her upper lip; but she has a sweet voice, gentle manners, and a noble bearing; she is a woman of quality.

Madame de Fischtaminel, whom Madame de —— had taken for a friend,—almost all pious women patronize some woman reputed to be of easy virtue, alleging a prospective conversion as the excuse for

such friendship,—Madame de Fischtaminel claims that these estimable qualities are, in the case of this Caroline of the pious species, the results of a victory won by religion over a disposition naturally violent.

These details are necessary, in order that the petty worry may be set forth in all its horror.

Adolphe had been obliged to leave his wife for two months, in April, immediately after the forty days of Lent, which Caroline rigorously observes. In the early days of June, therefore, madame was awaiting monsieur's return, she was expecting him from day to day. Passing from hope to hope,

"Renewed every morning and crushed every evening,"

she went on until Sunday, the day on which her presentiments, paroxysmal in intensity, led her to believe that the longed-for husband would arrive at an early hour.

When a pious woman is waiting for her husband, when that husband has been missing from the household for several months, she devotes infinitely more time to the details of her toilet than a young girl awaiting her first betrothed.

This virtuous Caroline was so completely absorbed by these entirely personal preparations that she forgot to attend eight-o'clock mass. She had intended to hear a low mass, but she trembled lest she should lose the ecstasy of the first glance, if her dear Adolphe should arrive very early. Her maid,

who respectfully left madame alone in the dressing-room, where pious and pimply women never allow anyone to enter, not even their husbands, especially when they are thin—her maid heard her exclaim more than three times:

"If that is monsieur, let me know!"

As the rumbling of a vehicle shook the furniture, Caroline assumed a gentle tone to disguise the violence of her emotion.

"Oh! it is he! Run, Justine! tell him I am waiting for him here."

Caroline sank upon a couch, she was trembling too much to stand.

The vehicle was a butcher's wagon.

In such anxiety the hour for the eight-o'clock mass glided by like an eel in its mud. Madame's toilet was resumed, for madame was in the habit of dressing herself unaided. The maid had already received in the face, from the dressing-room, a superb chemise of plain linen with a plain hem, like those she had been giving her mistress for three months.

"What are you thinking of, Justine? I told you to take one of the chemises that aren't numbered."

There were only seven or eight of the chemises without numbers, as in the most splendid trousseaux. They were chemises resplendent with dainty lace and embroidery; a woman must be a queen, a young queen, to have a dozen of them. Each of madame's was edged with valenciennes below and still more coquettishly trimmed around the top.

This detail of our manners will serve, perhaps, to give the masculine world a hint of the domestic drama revealed by this exceptional chemise.

Caroline had put on Scotch thread stockings and little prunella buskins and her most deceptive stays. She caused her hair to be dressed in the style that was most becoming to her, and donned a cap of the last degree of elegance. It is useless to speak of her morning gown. A pious woman who lives in Paris and who loves her husband is quite as expert as any coquette in choosing those pretty little striped stuffs, cut *à la redingote*, fastened by loops and buttons which require a woman to refasten them two or three times an hour, with more or less charming gestures.

The nine-o'clock mass, the ten-o'clock mass, all the various masses glided by in these preparations, which are to a loving woman one of the twelve labors of Hercules.

Pious women rarely go to church in a carriage, and they are right. Except in the case of a pouring rain, or of intolerably bad weather, one should not make a display where one ought to humble one's self. So that Caroline was afraid of marring the freshness of her dress, her stockings, and her shoes. Alas! these pretexts conceal another reason.

"If I am at church when Adolphe arrives, I shall lose all the advantage of his first glance: he will think that I prefer high mass to him."

She made this sacrifice for her husband with the object of pleasing him, a terribly mundane object:

to prefer the creature to the Creator! a husband to God! Go and listen to a sermon and you will know what such a sin costs.

"After all," says madame to herself, quoting her confessor, "society is based upon marriage, which the Church numbers among the sacraments."

And that is the way in which religious instruction is sometimes made to serve the purposes of a blind, albeit legitimate passion. Madame refused to breakfast, and ordered the breakfast to be ready at any moment, as she herself was ready at any moment to receive her absent beloved.

All these little things may arouse laughter; but in the first place they happen in the case of all those couples who adore each other, or of whom one adores the other; secondly, in a woman so self-contained, so reserved, so dignified as this woman, these confessions of emotion went beyond all the bounds imposed upon her sentiments by the lofty self-respect born of true piety. When Madame de Fischtaminel described this little episode in the life of a pious wife, embellishing it with amusing details, acted as women of the world have the art of acting their anecdotes, I took the liberty of telling her that it was the Song of Songs in action.

"If monsieur does not come," says Justine to the cook, "what will become of us? Madame has already thrown her chemise in my face."

At last, Caroline heard the crack of a postilion's whip, the familiar rumbling of a travelling carriage, the noise made by the peculiar gait of post-horses,

and the jingling of bells! Oh! she no longer had any doubt; those bells caused her to throw aside her reserve.

"The gate! open the gate! there's monsieur! They won't open the gate!"

And the pious woman stamped on the floor and broke her bell-rope.

"But, madame," said Justine, with the eagerness of a servant doing her duty, "it's some people going away."

"One thing is certain," says the shamefaced Caroline, "I will never let Adolphe travel without me again."

A poet of Marseille—no one knows certainly whether it was Méry or Barthélemy—admitted that if his best friend did not arrive promptly at the appointed hour for dinner, he waited patiently for five minutes; at the tenth minute, he was conscious of a longing to throw his napkin in his face; at the twelfth, he wished that some great disaster might befall him; at the fifteenth, he was as likely as not to stab him with the carving-knife.

All women who wait are poets of Marseille, if we may be pardoned for comparing the vulgar pangs of hunger to the sublime Song of Songs of a Catholic spouse, hoping for the bliss of the first glance of a husband who has been absent three months. Let all those persons who love one another and meet that other after an absence a thousand times accursed, be kind enough to remember their first glance: it says so many things that often, when

you find yourself face to face with persons who are disagreeable to you, you lower your eyes!—Each has a thrill of awe, the eyes do so flash fire! This poem, in which every man is as great as Homer, in which he appears a god to the loving woman, is to a pious, thin, pimply woman all the more imposing because she cannot, like Madame de Fischtaminel, print an edition of several copies. Her husband to her is all in all!

Be not surprised, therefore, to learn that Caroline missed all the masses and ate no breakfast. This hunger to see Adolphe, this frantic hope contracted her stomach violently. She did not once think of God during the time for the various masses, nor during vespers. She could not sit comfortably, she was not firm on her legs: Justine advised her to go to bed. Caroline, vanquished, went to bed about half-past five in the afternoon, after taking a little soup; but she ordered a dainty little repast to be ready at ten o'clock.

"I shall probably sup with monsieur," she said.

This sentence was the conclusion of terrible philippics thundered forth inwardly: she was at the carving-knife stage described by the Marseillais poet; so that the words were uttered in a terrible tone. At three o'clock in the morning, when Adolphe arrived, Caroline was sleeping soundly, so that she heard neither carriage nor horses nor bells nor opening doors!

Adolphe, giving orders that madame should not be disturbed, went to bed in the guest-room. When

Caroline on waking in the morning learned of her Adolphe's return, two tears started from her eyes; she ran to the guest-room without any preliminary attention to her toilet; at the door a horrible servant informed her that monsieur, having travelled two hundred leagues and passed two nights without sleep, had requested that he might not be disturbed: he was exceedingly fatigued.

Caroline, like a pious woman, noisily opened the door, but was unable to rouse the only husband Heaven had given her; then she hurried to the church to hear a mass of thanksgiving.

As madame was visibly out of sorts for three days, Justine retorted, apropos of an unjust reproof, and with the cunning of a lady's-maid:

"But, madame, monsieur has returned!"

"Thus far he has simply returned to Paris," said the pious Caroline.

WASTED ATTENTIONS

Put yourself in the place of a poor woman, of questionable beauty, who owes to the size of her dowry a husband long awaited, who takes an infinite amount of trouble and spends a great deal of money in order to appear to advantage and follow the fashions, who devotes herself to carrying on handsomely and with economy an establishment heavy to handle, who from a sense of duty, and from necessity perhaps, loves only her husband, who has no other object in life than that precious husband's happiness, who combines, to express the

whole idea in a word, the maternal sentiment *with the sentiment of her duties*. This underlined circumlocution is the paraphrase of the word love in the language of prudes.

Do you understand? Well, this too dearly-loved husband happened to say, while dining with his friend Monsieur de Fischtaminel, that he was fond of mushrooms *à l'Italienne*.

If you have observed female nature at all in its noble and grand and estimable qualities, you know that there is no greater small pleasure for the woman who loves than that of seeing the loved one devour his favorite dishes. This is an offshoot of the fundamental idea upon which woman's affection is based: to be the source of all the loved one's pleasures, small and great. Love enlivens every thing in life, and conjugal love has, more than all other varieties, the right to descend to the infinitely small.

Caroline spends two or three days in finding out how the Italians cook mushrooms. She discovers a Corsican abbé who tells her that at Biffi's, on Rue Richelieu, she can, not only learn how mushrooms *à l'Italienne* are cooked, but can taste Milanese mushrooms for herself. Our pious Caroline thanks Abbé Serpolini, and determines to send him a breviary in token of her gratitude.

Caroline's cook goes to Biffi's, returns from Biffi's, and exhibits to Madame la Comtesse a parcel of mushrooms as large as the coachman's ears.

"Good!" she says; "and did he tell you how to cook them?"

"That's nothing at all to us!" replies the cook.

As a general rule, cooks know everything in culinary matters, except how a cook can steal.

That evening, at the second course, all Caroline's nerves tingled with pleasure as she saw the footman about to serve a certain *timbale*. She had waited for this dinner as she had waited for monsieur.

But, between waiting with certainty and anticipating a certain pleasure, there is for the elect—and physiologists include among the elect a woman who adores her husband—there is between these two forms of suspense the same difference that there is between a lovely night and a lovely day.

The timbale is passed to dear Adolphe, he carelessly dips the spoon into it and helps himself, without noticing Caroline's extreme excitement, to some of those plump, downy little objects which tourists who go to Milan do not recognize for a long time, mistaking them for some sort of mollusk.

"Well, Adolphe?"

"Well, my dear?"

"Don't you recognize them?"

"What?"

"Your mushrooms *à l'Italienne*."

"These, mushrooms? I thought— Why, yes, on my word, they are mushrooms—"

"*A l'Italienne!*"

"Bah! they're old preserved mushrooms, *à la Milanaise;* I abhor them."

"What is it that you're so fond of, then?"

"*Fungi trifolati.*"

Let us remark, to the shame of a generation which assigns a number to everything, which puts all creation in bottles, which is classifying at this moment a hundred and fifty thousand species of insects and giving them names ending in *us*, so that in all countries *silbermanus* shall mean the same individual to all the scientists who put together or dissect insects' claws with pincers, that we lack a nomenclature for culinary chemistry which would enable all the cooks on the globe to identify their dishes with absolute accuracy. There ought to be a diplomatic convention that the French language shall be the language of the kitchen, as scientists have adopted Latin for botany and entomology, unless it be thought best to follow their example and to adopt kitchen Latin in good faith.

"Why, my dear," continues Adolphe, noticing that his chaste helpmeet's face lengthens and turns yellow, "in France we call that dish mushrooms *à l'Italienne*, *à la Provençale*, or *à la Bordelaise*. The mushrooms are cut into small pieces and fried in oil with certain ingredients, the names of which escape me. They put a touch of garlic in, I think."

Talk of disasters, of petty worries!—this one, you see, is to a wife's heart what the pain caused by extracting a tooth is to a child of eight. *Ab uno disce omnes*, which means: Here is one! seek others in your memory; for we have taken this culinary

example as the prototype of all those which drive loving and unloved wives to despair.

Smoke Without Fire

The woman abounding in faith in the man she loves is a creature of the novelist's imagination. There is no such female character in existence, any more than there is such a thing as a rich marriage-portion in these days. The fiancée has remained; but marriage-portions have shared the fate of kings. Confidence may gleam for a few instants at the dawn of love, but it vanishes at once, like a shooting-star.

To every woman who is not Dutch, English, Belgian, or a native of any swampy country, love is a pretext for suffering, a means of employing the super-abundant forces of her nerves and her imagination.

Thus the second thought which seizes a happy woman, a loved woman, is the fear of losing her happiness; for we must do her the justice to say that the first thought is to enjoy it. All those who possess treasures fear thieves; but they do not, like woman, attribute feet and wings to gold pieces.

The little blue flower of perfect felicity is not so common that the man who, by God's favor, holds it in his hand, should be so foolish as to let it go.

Axiom

No woman is abandoned without a reason.

This axiom is written on the hearts of all women, hence the frenzy of the abandoned woman.

We are not dealing with the petty worries of love; we live in a calculating age, when few men leave their wives, whatever they may do; for of all wives, the lawful wife to-day is the least expensive. Now, every wife who is beloved by her husband has experienced the petty worry of suspicion. This suspicion, just or unjust, engenders a multitude of domestic annoyances, and this is the greatest of all.

Some day, Caroline notices that her dear Adolphe leaves her a little too often on business, the everlasting Chaumontel affair, which is interminable.

AXIOM

All households have their Chaumontel affair.—See *Worries within Worries*.

In the first place, a woman no more believes in business, than theatrical managers and publishers believe in the illnesses of actors and authors.

As soon as the man she loves absents himself, even though she may have made him too happy, every woman believes that he is hurrying away to some waiting joy.

In this connection, women attribute superhuman faculties to men. Fear magnifies everything, it dilates the eyes and heart, it makes a woman insane.

"Where is monsieur going?—What is monsieur doing?—Why does he leave me?—Why doesn't he take me with him?"

These four questions are the four cardinal points of the compass-card of suspicion, and rule the raging sea of soliloquies. From these horrible tempests which ravage women's hearts there springs a base, undignified determination, which every woman, duchess and bourgeoise, baroness and broker's wife, angel and fury, indifferent and passionate, puts into execution at once. They all imitate the government, they play the spy. That which the State resorts to in the interest of all, they consider legitimate, lawful, and proper in the interest of their love. This fatal inquisitiveness on the part of a wife forces her to have agents; and the agent of every woman who still respects herself in this condition of affairs, in which jealousy will not allow her to respect anything else:—neither your boxes, nor your clothes, nor the drawers of your desk or table or bureau, nor your secret portfolios, nor your papers, nor your travelling case, nor your toilet arrangements,—in this way a wife discovers that her husband dyed his moustaches before he was married, that he retains the letters of a very dangerous ex-mistress, whom he thus keeps at bay,—nor your elastic belts;—her agent, we say, the only person in whom a wife confides, is her maid, for her maid understands her, excuses her, and applauds her.

In the paroxysms of curiosity, of passion, of inflamed jealousy, a woman realizes nothing, counts the cost of nothing; SHE IS DETERMINED TO KNOW EVERYTHING.

And Justine is overjoyed; she sees her mistress

compromising herself with her, she espouses her passion, her alarms, her dreads, and her suspicions with appallingly enthusiastic interest. Justine and Caroline hold councils, secret conversations. All espionage necessitates such relations. Under these circumstances, a maid becomes the arbiter of the fate of the husband and wife. Example: Lord Byron.

"Madame," Justine says some day, "it is the fact that monsieur goes to see a woman."

Caroline turns pale.

"But madame need not be alarmed, she is an old woman."

"Ah! Justine, no women are old in the eyes of some men; men are inexplicable."

"But, madame, this is not a lady, it is a woman, a woman of the people."

"Ah! Justine, Lord Byron loved a fishwoman at Venice; little Madame de Fischtaminel told me so."

And Caroline bursts into tears.

"I have been talking to Benoît."

"Well, what does Benoît think?"

"Benoît thinks that this woman is a go-between, for monsieur conceals his actions from everybody, even from Benoît."

Caroline lives in hell for a week, all her savings go to hire spies and pay for their reports.

At last, Justine goes to see the woman, whose name is Madame Mahuchet; she bribes her, and finally learns that monsieur has kept a witness of his youthful follies, a sweet little boy who looks like

him, and that this woman is the nurse, the second-hand mother who takes care of little Frédéric, who pays his quarterly school bills, and through whose hands pass the twelve hundred, the two thousand francs annually "lost at play" by monsieur.

"And the mother?" cries Caroline.

But the clever Justine, madame's Providence, succeeds in convincing her that Mademoiselle Suzanne Beauminet, a former grisette, become Madame Sainte-Suzanne, has died at La Salpêtrière, or has made her fortune and married in the provinces, or occupies so low a place in the social hierarchy, that it is most improbable that madame will ever meet her.

Caroline breathes again, the dagger has been drawn from her heart, she is happy; but she has only daughters, she longs for a boy. This little drama of the unjust suspicion, the comedy of all the conjectures caused by Mère Mahuchet, these phases of unfounded jealousy are set forth here as being typical of this condition of affairs, the variations of which are as infinite in number as temperaments, as social ranks, as species.

This source of petty worries is mentioned here so that all women seated upon this strand may contemplate their conjugal life, past and to come, review their secret adventures, their unavowed miseries, the eccentricity which caused their errors, and the peculiar fatalities to which they owe a moment of frenzy, an unavailing despair, sufferings which they might have spared themselves, happy one and all to be deceived!

This petty worry has for a corollary the following one, which is much more serious and often without a remedy, especially when it is caused by vices of another sort, not within our scope, for in this work the wife is always supposed to be virtuous—until the catastrophe.

The Domestic Tyrant

"My dear Caroline," Adolphe says to his wife one day, "are you satisfied with Justine?"

"Why, yes, dear."

"You don't think that she speaks to you in a way that isn't quite becoming?"

"Do you suppose I take any notice of a lady's-maid? it seems that *you* watch her!"

"I beg your pardon?" says Adolphe in an indignant tone that always enchants a woman.

In truth, Justine is a genuine actress's lady's-maid, a woman of some thirty years, marked by the small-pox with a thousand dimples in which the Loves do not play, blear-eyed, brown as opium, with long legs and short body, and a carriage to match. She has ten thousand francs and would like to marry Benoît; but at that unexpected attack Benoît demanded his discharge. Such is the portrait of the domestic tyrant enthroned by Caroline's jealousy.

Justine takes her coffee in bed in the morning and manages to have it as good as, not to say better than, madame's. Justine goes out sometimes without asking leave, she goes out dressed like the wife

of a second-class banker. She wears a little pink bonnet, somewhat out of date, an old dress of madame's made over, a handsome shawl, bronze boots, and apocryphal jewels.

Justine is sometimes in an ill-humor and makes her mistress feel that she is as much a wife as herself, although unmarried. She has her fits of the blues, her whims, her vapors. She actually dares to have nerves. She answers gruffly, she is unendurable to the other servants, and her wages have been considerably increased.

"My dear, that woman is becoming more and more intolerable every day," Adolphe says to his wife one day, noticing that Justine has a habit of listening at doors; "and if you don't dismiss her, I will dismiss her myself!"

Caroline, terrified beyond measure, is compelled to lecture Justine while monsieur is away.

"Justine, you abuse my kindness to you: you have handsome wages, you have perquisites and presents; try to behave so that you can remain here, for monsieur wishes to dismiss you."

The lady's-maid humbles herself and weeps; she is so attached to madame! Ah! she would go through fire for her, she would submit to be chopped to pieces; she is ready to do anything.

"If you had anything to conceal, madame, I would take all the blame for it."

"Very well, Justine, very well, my girl," says Caroline in dismay; "there's no occasion for that; just try to keep to your place."

"Aha!" says Justine to herself, "so monsieur wants to dismiss me.—Just wait, you old screw! I'll make life a burden to you."

A week later, while arranging her mistress's hair, Justine looks in the glass to make sure that madame can see all the contortions of her features; the result being that Caroline soon asks her:

"What is the matter, Justine?"

"I would tell madame what is the matter, but madame is so weak with monsieur—"

"Come, come, tell me!"

"I know very well, madame, why monsieur wishes to send me away: monsieur has no confidence now in anybody but Benoît, and Benoît is playing cautious with me."

"Well, what is it? what does he know?"

"I am sure that those two between them are concocting something against madame," replies the maid, confidently.

Caroline, whom Justine is watching in the glass, has become pale as death; all the tortures of the preceding petty worry return, and Justine finds that she has become necessary to her mistress, as spies are to the government when a conspiracy is discovered. Meanwhile, Caroline's friends cannot understand why she clings to such a disagreeable creature, who assumes the airs of a mistress, wears a bonnet, and who is insufferably impertinent.

This senseless domination is discussed at Madame Deschars's, at Madame de Fischtaminel's, and it is a subject of jesting. Some ladies have glimpses of

most shocking reasons for it, reasons which reflect upon Caroline's honor.

AXIOM

In society, people know how to put overcoats on all truths, even the most attractive ones.

In short, the *aria della Calumnia* is executed exactly as if Don Basilio were singing it.

It is averred that Caroline cannot dismiss her maid.

Society makes desperate efforts to discover the solution of this enigma. Madame de Fischtaminel laughs at Adolphe, Adolphe returns home in a rage, makes a scene with Caroline, and dismisses Justine.

This produces such an effect on Justine that she falls ill and takes to her bed. Caroline suggests to her husband that it is hard to turn a girl in Justine's condition into the street, a girl, too, who is deeply attached to them and has been with them ever since they were married.

"Let her go as soon as she is better!" says Adolphe.

Caroline, reassured concerning Adolphe and shamefully gulled by Justine, reaches the point of wishing to be rid of her; she applies a violent remedy to the wound, and determines to pass through the Caudine Forks of another petty worry, namely:

CONFESSION

One morning, Adolphe is cajoled and wheedled to an unusual degree. The too happy husband seeks

the reason for this overflow of affection, and he hears Caroline say to him in a caressing voice:

"Adolphe?"

"What?" he replies, alarmed by the inward trepidation betokened by Caroline's voice.

"Promise not to be angry."

"Yes."

"Not to bear me a grudge."

"Yes! Tell me."

"To forgive me and never to mention it."

"Come, tell me what it is!"

"At all events, the wrong is all on your side."

"Tell me!—or I'll go away."

"Nobody but you can help me out of the embarrassment I am in—all on account of you!"

"But tell me—"

"It's about—"

"About?"

"Justine."

"Don't speak of her, she is dismissed, and I never want to see her again; her behavior endangers your reputation—"

"What can people say? what has anyone said?"

The scene changes, and a collateral explanation ensues, which causes Caroline to blush as soon as she realizes the full scope of the conjectures of her best friends, all of whom are overjoyed to detect peculiar reasons for her virtue.

"Well, Adolphe, you yourself have brought it all upon me! Why did you never tell me anything about Frédéric?"

"The Great? the King of Prussia?"

"That is just like you men! Tartuffe! would you make me believe that you have forgotten your son in so short a time, your son and Mademoiselle Suzanne Beauminet's?"

"You know—?"

"All!—all about Mère Mahuchet and your going to take the little fellow to dinner when he has leave of absence from school."

Sometimes the Chaumontel affair is a natural child; that is the least dangerous form of Chaumontel affairs.

"How like moles you pious women can burrow!" cries Adolphe in dismay.

"It was Justine who discovered everything."

"Ah! now I understand her insolence—"

"Oh! my dear, your Caroline has been very unhappy, I tell you, and this spying, which is due to my insane love for you—for I do love you—to madness— Yes, if you were false to me, I should fly to the ends of the world— Well, this unfounded jealousy put me under Justine's domination— So, my dear, do you help me out of the scrape!"

"Let this teach you, my angel, never to make use of your servants for such purposes, if you expect them to serve you. It is the lowest of tyrannies. To be at the mercy of one's servants!"

Adolphe takes advantage of this episode to frighten Caroline, for he is thinking of his future Chaumontel affairs, and would like not to be spied upon any more.

Justine is summoned, Adolphe dismisses her instantly, without allowing her to explain herself. Caroline believes that her petty worry is at an end. She hires another maid.

Justine, whose twelve or fifteen thousand francs have attracted the attentions of a water-carrier, becomes Madame Chavagnac and embarks in the trade of selling fruit. Ten months later, Caroline receives by messenger, in Adolphe's absence, a letter written on school-paper, in strokes which would require three months' treatment to correct their shape, and thus conceived:

"*Madam!* *

"*Vous êt hindigneuman trompai parre msieu poure mame deux Fischtaminelle, ile i vat tou lé soarres, ai vous* ni voilliez *queu du feux; vous n'avet queu ceu que vou mairitté, j'ean suis contant, ai jai bien éloneure de von saluair.*"

Caroline leaps like a lioness stung by a gadfly; she takes her place once more on the gridiron of suspicion, she renews her struggle with the unknown.

When she has convinced herself of the injustice of her suspicions, there comes another letter which offers to give her information concerning a Chaumontel affair which Justine has unearthed.

* "MADAME!

"You are shamefully deceived by monsieur with Madame de Fischtaminel, he goes there every evening, and you won't believe it; you have no more than you deserve, I am glad of it, and I have the honor to salute you."

The petty worry of *confessions*, remember, mesdames, is often of a more serious nature than this.

HUMILIATIONS

To the glory of wives be it said, they cling to their husbands when their husbands no longer cling to them, not only because there exist more ties, socially speaking, between a married woman and a man than between that man and his wife, but also because woman has more delicacy of feeling, a higher sense of honor than man,—aside from the great question of marriage, of course.

AXIOM

In a husband there is a man, nothing more; in a married woman, there is a man, a father, a mother, and a wife.

A married woman is sensitive enough for four, yes, for five, if you examine her closely.

Now, it is well to remark here that, for women, love is a general absolution: the man who loves may commit crimes if he please, he is always as white as snow in the eyes of the woman who loves him, if he loves her dearly. As for the married woman, whether she be loved or not, she feels so deeply that her husband's honor and reputation are the fortune of her children, that she acts like the woman who loves, so powerful are social interests.

This deep feeling engenders for some Carolines petty worries which, unfortunately for this book, have a sad side.

Adolphe has compromised himself. We will not enumerate all the methods of compromising one's self, for that would lead us into personalities. We will take for an example only that one of all the social sins which our epoch excuses, winks at, understands, and commits most frequently—honest *theft*, well-disguised extortion, fraud that is very excusable when it is successful, such as an agreement with the municipal or departmental authorities to sell one's property at the highest possible price to a town, a department, etc.

For instance, Adolphe, being insolvent, to *cover himself*,—which means to recover his credit,—has dabbled in illicit acts which may require a man to answer in the Assize Court. Indeed, it is not certain that the audacious creditor may not be looked upon as an accomplice.

Observe that in all failures, in the case of the most honorable houses, *to cover one's self* is looked upon as the most sacred of duties; but it is advisable not to allow the unpleasant side of the *covering* process to be seen too plainly, as in prudish England.

Adolphe in his embarrassment, for his adviser has told him not to appear in any way, has recourse to Caroline; he teaches her her lesson, he coaches her, he drills her in the Code, he has an eye to her costume, he fits her out like a brig starting on a voyage, and despatches her to a judge or a syndic. The judge, apparently a man of the strictest virtue, is a libertine underneath; he maintains his serious expression at the appearance of a pretty woman,

and he says some exceedingly bitter things about Adolphe.

"I pity you, madame; you belong to a man who may cause you many unpleasant experiences; a few more affairs of this sort and he will lose his reputation altogether. Have you children? pardon the question—you are so young that it is very natural."—And the judge places himself as near as possible to Caroline.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Oh! great Heaven! what a future! My first thought was for the wife; but now I pity you twice over, for I think of the mother.—Ah! how you must have suffered in coming here. Poor, poor women!"

"Ah! monsieur, you are interested in me, are you not?"

"Alas! what can I do?" says the judge, probing Caroline with an oblique glance. "What you ask of me is malfeasance; I am a magistrate before I am a man."

"Ah! monsieur, be a man only."

"Do you know what you are saying—my fair lady?"

At this point, the magistrate takes Caroline's trembling hand.

Caroline, reflecting that the honor of her husband and her children is at stake, says to herself that this is no time to play the prude; she allows her hand to be taken, after making enough resistance for the old libertine—luckily he is old—to look upon it as a favor.

"Come! come! my fair lady, do not weep," continues the magistrate, "I should be distressed to cause so charming a creature to shed tears; we will see—you may come to-morrow and explain the affair to me; I must see all the papers, and we will look them over together."

"Monsieur—"

"But we must—"

"Monsieur—"

"Have no fear, fair lady, a judge may well know how to reconcile what he owes to the law and"—he assumes a sly expression—"to beauty."

"But, monsieur—"

"Set your mind at rest," he says, holding both her hands and pressing them, "and we will try to change this great offence into a peccadillo."

And he escorts Caroline to the door, aghast at the rendezvous thus forced upon her.

The syndic is a jovial young man, who receives Madame Adolphe with a smile. He smiles at everything, and he puts his arm around her waist, still smiling, with a seductive adroitness which gives Caroline no excuse for being offended, especially as she says to herself: "Adolphe urged me particularly not to irritate the syndic."

Nevertheless, Caroline, were it only in the interest of the syndic himself, releases herself and repeats the "monsieur!" which she has already said three times to the magistrate.

"Do not take it ill of me, you are irresistible, you are an angel, and your husband is a monster;

for what purpose can he have in sending a siren to a young man whom he knows to be inflammable?"

"But my husband could not come himself; he is in bed, very ill, and you have threatened him with such terrible consequences that the urgency of the affair—"

"Has he no solicitor, no counsel?"

Caroline is horrified by that question, which reveals profound villainy on Adolphe's part.

"He thought, monsieur, that you would have some consideration for the mother of a family, for children—"

"Ta ta ta," rejoins the syndic. "You came to assail my independence, my conscience, you would have me betray the creditors to you; very good, I do more than that, I place my heart and my fortune at your disposal; your husband wishes to save your honor; I give you mine."

"Monsieur," she says, trying to raise the syndic, who is at her feet, "you frighten me."

She plays the terrified woman and runs to the door, extricating herself from that delicate situation as women have the art of doing, that is to say, without compromising themselves in any way.

"I will return," she says, with a smile, "when you will behave better."

"You leave me thus?—beware! your husband may find himself in the dock at the Assize Court; he is a party to a fraudulent bankruptcy, and we know many things about him that are not to his credit. This is not his first exploit; he has been in

some unsavory affairs, some dishonorable underhand schemes; you are very careful of the honor of a man who snaps his fingers at his own honor and yours."

Caroline, alarmed by these words, releases the latch, closes the door, and returns.

"What do you mean, monsieur?" she says, incensed at that brutal attack.

"Well, the affair—"

"Chaumontel?"

"No, this speculating in houses which he hires insolvent builders to build."

Caroline remembers the speculation entered into by Adolphe—see the *Jesuitism of Women*—to double his income; she trembles. The syndic has curiosity on his side.

"Sit you down there. At this distance, I shall behave myself, but I can look at you—"

And he describes the plan at length,—a plan conceived by Du Tillet the banker,—interrupting himself to say:

"Oh! what a pretty, tiny, dainty little foot! MADAME alone has a foot as small as that.—*Du Tillet compromised, therefore.*—And such an ear! did anyone ever tell you that you had a charming ear?—*And Du Tillet was wise, for judgment was already entered.*—I like little ears. Let me have a cast made of yours, and I will do whatever you wish.—*Du Tillet took advantage of that to make your imbecile of a husband carry the whole thing.*—Oh! what lovely cloth! you are divinely dressed."

"We were saying, monsieur—?"

"As if I know what I say when I am looking at a Raphaelesque face like yours!"

At the twenty-seventh compliment, Caroline discovers that the syndic is a bright fellow: she pays him a compliment and goes away without learning the whole story of that enterprise which eventually swallowed three hundred thousand francs.

This petty worry has innumerable variations.

EXAMPLE.—Adolphe is brave and sensitive; he is walking on the Champs-Elysées, there is a crowd of people there, and in that crowd certain young men devoid of refinement indulge in jocose remarks *à la* Panurge; Caroline endures them without appearing to notice them, to avoid involving her husband in a duel.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE.—An *enfant terrible* asks in the presence of visitors:

"Mamma, would you let Justine cuff me?"

"No, certainly not."

"Why do you ask that, my little man?" says Madame Foullepointe.

"Because she just gave papa a famous whack, and he's much stronger than me."

Madame Foullepointe begins to laugh, and Adolphe, who has thought of paying court to Madame Foullepointe, is cruelly laughed at by her after he has had—see the *Last Quarrel*—a first last quarrel with Caroline.

THE LAST QUARREL

In every household, the husband and wife hear a fatal hour strike sooner or later. It is a veritable

knell, the death of jealousy, a grand, a noble, a charming passion, the only genuine symptom of love, if, indeed, it be not *its double.* When a woman is no longer jealous of her husband, it is all over, she has ceased to love him. In like manner, conjugal love is extinguished in the last quarrel a woman kindles.

AXIOM

When a woman ceases to quarrel with her husband, the Minotaur is sitting in an armchair by the hearth in the bedroom, tapping his patent-leather boots with his cane.

All wives must remember their last quarrel, that supreme petty worry which often breaks out about nothing, or even more often on the provocation of a brutal act, a decisive proof. This cruel farewell to the trust, the childlike joys of love, to virtue itself, is in a certain sense as capricious as life. Like life, it is not the same in any two families.

At this point, the author ought perhaps to mention all the varieties of quarrel if he wishes to be exact.

For instance, Caroline may have discovered that the judicial gown of the syndic in the Chaumontel affair conceals a gown made of an infinitely less rough material, of an agreeable color and silky texture; in a word, that Chaumontel has fair hair and blue eyes.

Or perhaps Caroline, having risen before Adolphe, has seen his coat thrown over a chair, wrong side out, and the edge of a little perfumed envelope,

protruding from the breast pocket, has caught her eye by its whiteness, like a sunbeam entering through a slit in the blinds of a tightly-closed chamber;—or she may have heard the rustling of the little note as she pressed Adolphe in her arms and touched that pocket of his coat;—or she may have been enlightened by the unfamiliar perfume which she had noticed about Adolphe for some time, and have read these few lines:

"*Haingra, sejé ce que tu veu dire avaic Hipolite, vien, e tu vairas si jeu thême.*"*

Or this:

"Yesterday, my friend, you kept me waiting; how will it be to-morrow?"

Or this:

"Women who love you, my dear monsieur, are very unfortunate in hating you so when you are not with them; beware! the hatred which lasts all the time you are absent may encroach upon the moments when you are present."

Or this:

"You villain of a Chodoreille! what were you doing yesterday on the boulevard with a woman hanging on your arm? If she is your wife, receive my commiseration for all the charms she has not; doubtless she has pawned them at the *Mont-de-piété;* but the pawn-ticket is lost."

Four notes emanating from the grisette, the lady, the pretentious bourgeoise, or the actress, among

* "Ingrate, do I know what you mean by Hippolyte? come, and you will see whether I love you."

whom Adolphe has selected his *belle*—according to the Fischtaminel vocabulary.

Or else Caroline, having gone to Ranelagh, closely veiled, under Ferdinand's escort, has seen with her own eyes Adolphe frantically dancing the polka with his arms around one of Queen Pomaré's maids of honor;—or Adolphe has made a mistake in her name for the seventh time, and, on waking in the morning, has called his wife Juliette or Charlotte or Lisa;—or a marketman, or the keeper of a restaurant, sends, in monsieur's absence, damnatory bills which fall into Caroline's hands.

Documents in the Chaumontel Affair

Private Parties Accommodated.

M. Adolphe

To Perrault Dr.

Delivered to Madame Schontz, Jan. 6, 18—, one pâté de foie gras	22 fr. 50 c.
Six bottles of various wines	70 "
Furnished at Hôtel du Congrès, Feb. 11, No. 21, private dinner, price agreed	100 "
Total	192 fr. 50 c.

Caroline studies the dates and remembers appointments relating to the Chaumontel affair. Adolphe had told her that Twelfth Night—January 6—was appointed for a meeting at which the Chaumontel affair was to be adjusted. On February 11 he had an appointment at the notary's to sign a release in the Chaumontel affair.

Or else—but it would be an insane undertaking to attempt to enumerate all the possibilities.

Every wife will remember how the bandage she had over her eyes finally fell; how, after many doubts, much heart-rending hesitation, she ended by inaugurating a quarrel simply to close the romance, to write *finis* on the last page, to stipulate for her independence, or to begin a new life.

Some women are fortunate enough to have been beforehand with their husbands; they start this quarrel by way of justification.

Nervous women fly out and do all sorts of violent things.

Mild-mannered women assume a tone of decision which makes the boldest husbands tremble. They who have no vengeance prepared weep copiously.

They who love you forgive. Ah! they can understand so readily—like the wife who was called "my berlin"—that their Adolphe is beloved by all Frenchwomen, that they are happy to be the lawful possessor of a man on whom all women dote.

Some wives, with lips shut as tight as strong-boxes, with muddy complexions and skinny arms, take a malicious pleasure in leading their Adolphe into the mire of falsehood and contradiction; they question him—see *Worries within Worries*—as a magistrate questions the criminal, holding in reserve the malignant pleasure of crushing his denials by direct proofs at a decisive moment. Generally, in this momentous crisis of conjugal life, the fair sex

acts as executioner, where, when the conditions are reversed, the man plays the assassin.

Thus. This last quarrel—you will soon know why the author calls it the *last*—always ends with a solemn, sacred promise, which women who are refined, noble, or merely clever, that is to say, all women, make, and which we give in its noblest form:

"Enough, Adolphe! we no longer love each other; you have been false to me and I shall never forget it. One can forgive, but to forget is impossible."

Women play the implacable only to make their forgiveness the more charming: they have divined God.

"We have to live together, like two friends," continues Caroline. "Very well, let us live like two brothers, two comrades. I have no desire to make your life unendurable, and I shall never refer to what has happened."

Adolphe holds out his hand; Caroline takes it and shakes it in the English fashion. Adolphe thanks Caroline, sees a prospect of happiness to come: he has transformed his wife into a sister, and thinks he is about to become a bachelor once more.

The next day, Caroline ventures to indulge in a very witty allusion—Adolphe cannot help laughing at it—to the Chaumontel affair. In society, she utters generalities which become particularities when applied to this last quarrel.

A fortnight has passed, and there has not been a

day when Caroline has not recalled the last quarrel, saying:

"It was the day I found the Chaumontel bill in your pocket;" or: "It happened since our last quarrel;" or: "It was the day when I first realized what life is," etc. She crushes Adolphe, she martyrizes him! In society, she says terrible things.

"We are very fortunate, my dear girl, when we cease to love each other; then we know how to make others love us."

And she glances at Ferdinand.

"Ah! so you, too, have your Chaumontel affair?" she says to Madame Foullepointe.

In fact, the last quarrel never ends, whence this axiom:

To put one's self in the wrong with his lawful wife is to solve the problem of perpetual motion.

Flat Failure

Women, and especially married women, stick ideas in their *dura mater* precisely as they stick pins in their pincushion; and the devil—do you understand?—the devil could not withdraw them; they reserve the right to stick them in, pull them out, and stick them in again.

One evening, Caroline returned from Madame Foullepointe's in a state of violent jealousy and ambition.

Madame Foullepointe, the *lioness*.—This word demands an explanation. It is the fashionable neologism;

it corresponds with some ideas, very paltry ideas, by the way, of present-day society: it must be used to make one's self understood when one wishes to describe a person as a woman of fashion. This lioness, then, rides every day, and Caroline has taken it into her head to take lessons in riding.

Observe that, when this phase of their married life has arrived, Adolphe and Caroline are at that season which we have called the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Families*, or they have already had two or three *Last Quarrels*.

"Adolphe," she says, "do you want to do me a favor?"

"Always."

"Will you refuse me?"

"Why, if what you ask is possible, I am ready—"

"Ah! so soon.—That is a husband's word—*if*—"

"What is it?"

"I would like to learn to ride."

"Why, Caroline, is it possible?"

Caroline looks out of the window and tries to wipe away a dry tear.

"Listen to me," continues Adolphe; "can I let you go to the riding-school alone? can I go with you, when business is causing me so much trouble and worry as it is just at this moment?—What is the matter, in Heaven's name? It seems to me I have given you convincing reasons."

Adolphe has visions of a stable to be hired, a pony to be purchased, the introduction into the household

of a groom and a groom's horse—in a word, all the annoyances of feminine *lionship*.

Few men who give women reasons instead of giving them what they desire have ventured to descend to the bottom of that abyss called the heart, to measure the violence of the tempest which suddenly rises there.

"Reasons! Oh! if you want reasons, here are some of them," cries Caroline. "I am your wife: you no longer care about pleasing me. And the expense! You are making a great mistake in this, my dear!"

Women have as many different inflections for the words *my dear* as Italians have for *Amico;* I have counted twenty-nine which express simply different degrees of hatred.

"Ah! you will see," continues Caroline. "I shall be ill, and you will have to pay the doctor and the druggist what the horse would have cost. I shall be shut up in the house, and that is all you care about. I expected it. I was sure of a refusal, when I asked your permission; I simply was curious to know what pretext you would find for it."

"But—Caroline—"

"Leave me alone at the riding-school!" she continues, paying no heed to him. "Is that a reason? Can't I go with Madame de Fischtaminel? Madame de Fischtaminel is learning to ride, and I don't think that Monsieur de Fischtaminel goes with her."

"But—Caroline."

"I am enchanted by your solicitude, you are very considerate of my welfare, really. Monsieur de Fischtaminel has more confidence in his wife than you have in yours. He doesn't go with her! Perhaps it is because of his confidence that you don't wish to have me at the riding-school, where I might be a witness of your confidences with La Fischtaminel!"

Adolphe tries to conceal the bored feeling caused by this torrent of words, which begins half-way between Madame Foullepointe's and his domicile, and finds no sea into which to empty itself. When Caroline is in her bedroom, she continues:

"You must see that, if reasons could restore my health and prevent me from craving the exercise which nature points out to me, I should not lack reasons to give myself; that I know all the reasons that can be given, and that I weighed them all before speaking to you."

This, mesdames, may be with the more propriety called the prologue to the conjugal drama, because it is delivered vehemently, punctuated with gestures, adorned with glances and other vignettes with which you illustrate those *chefs-d'œuvre*.

Caroline, having planted in Adolphe's heart the dread of a continuous begging scene, has felt her left-handed hatred of his government redouble in intensity. Madame sulks, and sulks so savagely that Adolphe is forced to notice it, under pain of being *minotaurized;* for mark this: the end of everything is at hand when one of two people who have

been married by the mayor, or simply at Gretna Green, does not notice the sulking of the other.

AXIOM

Humor driven in is a deadly poison.

It was for the purpose of avoiding this suicide of love that our ingenious France invented boudoirs. Women could not have Virgil's willows in the system upon which our modern houses are built. When oratories were tabooed, those cosy retreats became boudoirs.

This conjugal drama has three acts. The prologue: it has been played. Then comes the act of false coquetry; this is one of those in which Frenchwomen are most successful.

Adolphe wanders about the room as he undresses; and for a man, to undress is to display excessive weakness.

Surely, to every man of forty this axiom will seem profoundly just:

AXIOM

The ideas of a man who has removed his boots and trousers are no longer those of a man who wears those two tyrants of our mind.

Observe that this is an axiom in conjugal life only. It is what we call in morals a relative theorem.

Caroline measures, like a jockey on the racecourse, the moment when she can probably distance

her adversary. She lays her plans to be at that moment irresistibly fascinating to Adolphe.

Women possess a knack of imitating modesty, of slack-rope dancing; the secrets of a frightened dove, a vocal register peculiarly adapted for singing, like Isabelle in the fourth act of *Robert le Diable:* "Mercy for thee! mercy for me!" which leave horse-trainers a thousand leagues behind. As always, the devil succumbs. What would you have! it is the invariable story, it is the great Catholic mystery of the crushed serpent, of the enfranchised woman who becomes the great social force, as the Fourierites say. Herein, especially, is found the difference between the Oriental slave and the Occidental wife.

The second act ends on the conjugal pillow with *onomatopeias* all of which make for peace. Adolphe, like children with a tart before them, has promised whatever Caroline wished.

THIRD ACT.—When the curtain rises, the stage represents a bedroom in extreme disorder. Adolphe, in his dressing-gown, tries to go out and does go out, stealthily, without waking Caroline, who is sleeping soundly.

Caroline, extremely happy, rises, goes and consults her mirror, begins to worry about breakfast. An hour later, when she is ready, she is told that breakfast is served.

"Tell monsieur!"

"Monsieur is in the little salon, madame."

"What a nice little boy you are," she says, going up to Adolphe and reverting to the infantile, wheedling language of the honeymoon.

"How so?"

"Why, to let your Liline ride a horsey."

NOTE.—During the honeymoon, some very youthful wives use languages which Aristotle classified and defined in very ancient times.—See his *Pedagogy*.—Thus their conversation abounds in *youyous* and *lalas* and *nanas*, like mothers and nurses talking to young children. That is one of the secret reasons, discussed and asserted in bulky quartos by the Germans, which led the Cabiri, the creators of Greek mythology, to represent Love as a child. There are other reasons which women know, the principal one, according to them, being that love in man is always diminutive.

"Where did you get that idea, my love? under your nightcap?"

"What?"

Caroline stands as if rooted to the spot; she opens her eyes, dilated by surprise. Trembling with epilepsy within, she does not utter a word: she gazes at Adolphe. Beneath the satanic flames of that glance, Adolphe wheels about toward the dining-room; but he asks himself mentally whether he must not let Caroline take one lesson, and tell the riding-master to inspire her with a wholesome disgust of equestrianism by the severity of his instruction.

There is nothing so terrible as an actress who is confident of success and who *fait four*.

In the slang of the wings, *faire four* means to have no audience or to receive no applause; it means much trouble taken for nothing, it means failure at its apogee.

This petty worry—it is very petty—is reproduced in a thousand different ways in conjugal life, when the honeymoon is ended and when the wife has no private means.

Despite the author's repugnance to interpolate anecdotes in a work intended to be entirely aphoristic, the tissue of which is consistent only with observations more or less acute and very delicate, at least so far as their subject is concerned, it seems necessary to him to adorn this page with a true story for which he is indebted to one of our first physicians. This reiteration of the subject constitutes a rule of conduct for the use of Parisian doctors.

A certain husband found himself in our Adolphe's position. His Caroline, having made one flat failure, was bent upon triumphing, for Caroline often triumphs! The one to whom we refer played the comedy of the nervous invalid.—See the *Physiology of Marriage*, Meditation XXVI, subdivision of *Nervous Diseases*.—She had been lying on her couch for two months, rising at noon, renouncing all the pleasures of Paris. No more plays!—Oh! the pestiferous air, and the lights! the lights above all!—the confusion, the going in and coming out, the music—all most deplorable in its effects! terribly exciting!

No trips to the country!—Oh! they were what she longed for; but she must have—*desiderata*—a carriage and horses of her own. Monsieur would not give her a carriage and horses. And the bare idea of going in a hired equipage, a cab, nauseated her!

No cooking!—the smell of food turned madame's stomach. Madame drank innumerable drugs which her maid never saw her take.

In short, a horrifying extravagance in startling effects, in deprivations, in attitudes, in pearl powder to give her a deathly pallor, in mechanical devices, exactly as when the management of a theatre spreads the rumor of a fabulous stage-setting.

She had reached a point where it seemed that even a trip to some watering-place, to Ems, Homburg, or Carlsbad, would hardly cure madame; but she refused to start unless she could go in her own carriage. Still the carriage!

That Adolphe held firm, he did not yield.

That Caroline, being an exceedingly clever woman, acknowledged that her husband was in the right.

"Adolphe is right," she said to her friends; "the trouble is that I am foolish; he cannot, he ought not, to set up a carriage yet; men know better than we the condition of their business affairs."

At times, that Adolphe was driven to frenzy! women have ways of their own which properly come within the jurisdiction of hell alone. At last, during the third month, he met one of his school friends, a sublieutenant in the medical corps, ingenuous like

every young doctor, with epaulets only a few days old and the power to command troops to fire.

"Young woman, young doctor," said our Adolphe to himself.

And he requested the future Bianchon to come and tell him the truth concerning Caroline's condition.

"My dear, it is high time that I should bring a doctor to see you," said Adolphe to his wife that evening, "and here is the best possible doctor for a pretty woman."

The novice made a conscientious examination, led madame into conversation, felt her pulse respectfully, inquired concerning her most trifling symptoms, and, finally, talking all the while, involuntarily allowed an exceedingly doubtful, not to say ironical, smile and expression to wander over his lips and gleam in his eyes. He ordered a harmless preparation, on the great importance of which he insisted, and promised to return and learn its effect. In the reception-room, believing that he was alone with his old schoolmate, he executed an indescribable gesture.

"Nothing is the matter with your wife, my dear fellow; she is making a fool of you and of me."

"I suspected as much."

"But, if she continues her pretending, she will end by making herself ill; I am too good a friend to you to speculate on this subject, for I am determined that in my case there shall be an honest man beneath the physician."

"My wife wants a carriage."

In this instance, as in the *Funeral Solo*, Caroline had listened at the door.

To this day the young doctor is constantly compelled to clear his path of the calumnies which that charming woman throws into it every day; and, to obtain peace, he has been compelled to acknowledge that little error of his youth by naming his enemy, in order to force her to keep silent.

The Chestnuts in the Fire

No one knows how many shades there are in unhappiness; it depends altogether on the disposition, the power of the imagination, and the strength of the nerves. If it is impossible to grasp these ever-changing shades, we can at least indicate the sharply-defined colors, the principal changes. The author has reserved this petty worry for the last, therefore, for it is the only shade of unhappiness which is at all comical.

The author flatters himself that he has exhausted the most prominent shades. And so the women who have reached port, at the blessed age of forty, the period at which they make their escape from calumnies, evil-speaking, and suspicions, at which their liberty begins—these women will do him the justice to say that all the critical situations of a family are described or suggested in this work.

Caroline has her Chaumontel affair. She has learned to spring unexpected absences upon her husband, she has at last come to an understanding with Madame de Fischtaminel.

In all families, sooner or later, the Madame de Fischtaminels become the special providences of the Carolines.

Caroline cajoles Madame de Fischtaminel as sedulously as the army of Africa coaxes Abdel-Kader, she displays the solicitude to please her which a doctor displays to avoid curing a wealthy hypochondriacal patient. Caroline and Madame de Fischtaminel in concert invent occupations for dear Adolphe, when neither Madame de Fischtaminel nor Caroline desire to have that demigod among their penates. Madame de Fischtaminel and Caroline, having become the best friends in the world through Madame Foullepointe's exertions, have ended by learning and making use of that feminine freemasonry whose rites are learned by no initiation.

If Caroline writes this little note to Madame de Fischtaminel:

"My Angel:

"You will probably see Adolphe to-morrow; do not keep him from me too long; for I expect to go to the Bois with him about four o'clock; but, if you are very anxious to have him drive there with you, I will pick him up there. You must teach me your secret for entertaining people who are bored to death."

Madame de Fischtaminel says to herself:

"Pshaw! I shall have that fellow on my hands from noon till five o'clock."

AXIOM

Men do not always divine what, coming from a woman, means a positive request, but another woman never makes a mistake in that respect: she does the opposite.

These little creatures, especially Parisians, are the prettiest toys that social industry has invented: they lack meaning for those who do not adore them, who do not feel a constant delight in seeing them arrange their snares as they arrange their tresses, inventing languages of their own, constructing with their slender fingers machines adapted to crush fortunes endowed with the greatest resistant force.

One day, Caroline has taken the most minute precautions, she has written the day before to Madame Foullepointe to take Adolphe to Saint-Maur, to examine some property that is for sale; Adolphe will breakfast with her. She dresses Adolphe, she teases him about the care he bestows upon his toilet, and asks him impertinent questions about Madame Foullepointe.

"She is very attractive, and I believe she is bored to death with Charles: you will end by writing her name in your catalogue, you old Don Juan; but you won't need to resort to the Chaumontel affair again: I am not jealous now, you have your passport; do you like that better than being adored?—Monster! see how good I am to you!"

As soon as monsieur has gone, Caroline, who has not forgotten, the day before, to write to Ferdinand

to come to breakfast, makes a toilet which, in the delightful eighteenth century, so slandered by republicans, humanitarians, and fools, women of quality called their fighting costume.

Caroline has anticipated everything. Love is the best *valet de chambre* on earth: wherefore, the table is laid with diabolical coquetry. White damask table-linen, the little blue breakfast set, the silver-gilt service, the carved cream-jug, and flowers everywhere!

If it be in winter, she has found grapes somewhere, she has searched the cellar for bottles of exquisite old wines. The rolls come from the most famous baker. The toothsome dishes, the pâté de foie gras, all the dainty comestibles would have made Grimod de la Reynière neigh with delight, would make a bill-discounter smile, and would tell a professor of the ancient University what is going on.

Everything is ready. Caroline, for her part, has been ready since the day before; she contemplates her work. Justine sighs and arranges the chairs. Caroline removes a few yellow leaves from the flowers in the jardinière. At such times, a woman disguises what we must call the impatient pawing of the heart by those foolish occupations in which the fingers have the strength of pincers, in which the pink nails burn, and in which this unuttered cry rasps her throat:

"He is not coming!"

What a stab is dealt her by these words from Justine:

"A letter, madame!"

A letter instead of a Ferdinand! how nervously she breaks the seal! how many centuries of life are exhausted in unfolding it! Women know all about such things! As for men, when they have these attacks of frenzy, they destroy their ruffles.

"Justine, Monsieur Ferdinand is ill!" cries Caroline; "send for a carriage."

As Justine is going downstairs, Adolphe comes up.

"Poor madame!" says Justine to herself; "probably she doesn't need a carriage now."

"Ah! where have you come from?" cries Caroline, when she sees Adolphe standing in ecstasy before that quasi-voluptuous breakfast.

Adolphe, before whom his wife has long since ceased to place such dainty feasts, makes no reply. He divines what is going on when he finds written on the cloth the charming fancies which Madame de Fischtaminel, or mayhap the syndic in the Chaumontel affair, have written for him upon other no less elegant tables.

"Whom are you expecting?" he says, questioning in his turn.

"Whom do you suppose? it can be nobody but Ferdinand," replies Caroline.

"And he keeps you waiting."

"He is sick, poor fellow."

A droll idea passes through Adolphe's brain, and he rejoins, with a wink:

"I just saw him."

"Where?"

"In front of the Café de Paris with some friends."

"But why have you come back?" said Caroline, seeking to disguise a homicidal rage.

"Madame Foullepointe, who, so you told me, was tired of Charles, went to Ville d'Avray with him yesterday morning."

"And Monsieur Foullepointe?"

"He is taking a little pleasure trip apropos of a new Chaumontel affair, a pretty little—difficulty which he has encountered; but he will overcome it, no doubt."

Adolphe has seated himself at the table, observing:

"This happens very nicely; I am as hungry as two wolves."

Caroline takes her seat, examining Adolphe furtively; she is weeping inwardly; but she soon asks in a tone which she has succeeded in rendering indifferent:

"With whom was Ferdinand?"

"With rascals who take him into bad company. That young man is ruining himself; he goes to Madame Schontz's and is intimate with a parcel of lorettes; you should write to your uncle. I have no doubt it was some breakfast growing out of a wager made at Mademoiselle Malaga's—"

Adolphe glances slyly at Caroline, who lowers her eyes to conceal her tears.

"How pretty you have made yourself this morning!" he continues. "Ah! you are just a match for your breakfast. Ferdinand certainly won't breakfast as well as I—" etc.

Adolphe continues in this jocose strain to such good purpose that he inspires his wife with a desire to punish Ferdinand. Adolphe, who claims to have the appetite of two wolves, makes Caroline forget that there is a cab waiting at the door for her.

Ferdinand's concierge arrives about two o'clock, just as Adolphe has fallen asleep on a couch. This Iris of bachelors comes to inform Caroline that Monsieur Ferdinand is sadly in need of someone to care for him.

"Is he drunk?" asks Caroline, in a rage.

"He fought a duel this morning, madame."

Caroline falls in a swoon, recovers, and hurries to Ferdinand's side, consigning Adolphe to the infernal gods.

When women become the victims of these little schemes, as clever as their own, they exclaim:

"Men are frightful monsters!"

Ultima Ratio

This is our last observation. This work begins to be as tiresome to you as the subject itself, if you are married.

This work, which, in the author's view, is to the *Physiology of Marriage* what history is to philosophy, what fact is to theory, has its logic, just as life, broadly speaking, has its logic.

And this fatal, terrible logic is as follows: When the first part of this book, full of serious jests, comes to an end, Adolphe has reached, as you must have

noticed, the stage of complete indifference on the subject of matrimony.

He has read novels whose authors advise troublesome husbands to set sail for the other world or to live on good terms with the fathers of their children, to make much of them and love them; for, if literature is the image of morality, it must be admitted that morality acknowledges those defects in the fundamental institution of marriage which are pointed out in the work called the *Physiology of Marriage*. More than one man of eminent talent has dealt terrible blows upon this foundation-stone of society without shaking it.

Adolphe has read his wife too closely, and he disguises his indifference beneath the significant word *indulgence*. He is indulgent to Caroline, he sees in her simply the mother of his children, a pleasant companion, a sure friend, a brother.

At the moment when the wife's petty worries come to an end, Caroline, being much the cleverer of the two, has reached the point of making the most of this profitable indulgence; but she does not give up her dear Adolphe. It is in the nature of woman to abandon none of her rights. *God and my Right—Conjugal!* is, as everyone knows, the motto of England, especially to-day.

Women have so great a love of domination, that we will tell an anecdote illustrative thereof, which is not ten years old. It is a very youthful anecdote.

One of the great dignitaries of the House of Peers had a Caroline, fickle as almost all Carolines are.

That name brings a woman good luck. The dignitary in question, at this time a very old man, was on one side of the fireplace and Caroline on the other. Caroline had reached that lustrum during which women cease to tell their age. A friend came to inform them of the marriage of a general who had formerly been a frequent visitor at their house.

Caroline is in despair, she sheds genuine tears, shrieks aloud, and makes the great dignitary's head ache so that he tries to console her. Among other things, he forgets himself so far as to say to his wife:

"After all, what would you have, my dear? he couldn't marry you!"

And he was one of the highest functionaries in the State, but he was a friend of Louis XVIII. and necessarily a little Pompadourish.

Thus all the difference between Adolphe's situation and Caroline's consists in this: that, although monsieur no longer worries about madame, she reserves the right to worry about monsieur.

Now let us listen to what is called the *what will people say about it?* the subject of the conclusion of this work.

COMMENTARY

Wherein is explained the FELICHITTÀ *of Finales.*

Who has not heard some Italian opera in the course of his life?—If you have, you must have noticed the musical abuse of the term *felichittà*, scattered broadcast by the poet and the choruses just as everybody is leaving his box or his orchestra-stall.

A ghastly image of life. We take our leave of it at the moment that we are listening to the *felichittà*.

Have you reflected on the profound truth which resides in that finale, as the musician emits his last note and the author his last verse, as the orchestra gives its last stroke of the bow, its last blast, as the singers say to themselves: "Let us go and sup!" as the members of the chorus say to themselves: "What joy, it doesn't rain!"—Very well, in all ranks of life there comes a time when jesting is at an end, when the trick is turned, when one can choose his course, when everyone sings the *felichittà* on his own account. After passing through all the *duos*, the *solos*, the *stretti*, the *codas*, the concerted pieces, the *duettini*, the *nocturnes*, the phases to which these few scenes, taken from the ocean of conjugal life, direct your attention, and which are themes the variations on which will have been divined by intelligent persons as well as by fools,—in the matter of suffering we are all equal!—most Parisian households arrive sooner or later at the final chorus, which is as follows.

THE WIFE.—*To a young woman who is passing through the conjugal Indian summer.*—My dear, I am the happiest woman on earth. Adolphe is a model husband, kind, obliging, not in the way.—Isn't that so, Ferdinand?

(Caroline addresses Adolphe's cousin, a young man with a pretty cravat, glossy hair, patent-leather boots, coat of the most fashionable cut, crush hat, kid gloves, judiciously selected waistcoat, the choicest

thing in moustaches, whiskers, and goatee *à la* Mazarin, and endowed with a profound, silent, watchful admiration for Caroline.)

FERDINAND.—Adolphe is so lucky to have a wife like you! What does he lack? Nothing.

THE WIFE.—In the beginning we were always thwarting each other; but now we understand each other perfectly. Adolphe does only what it pleases him to do, he doesn't put himself out; I never ask him where he has been or what he has seen. Indulgence, my dear girl,—there is the great secret of happiness. You are still in the stage of petty quarrels, unfounded jealousies, disputes, pin-pricks. What good does it do? We women have a very short life! What have we? ten good years! Why stuff them full of *ennui?* I was just as you are; but one fine day, I met Madame Foullepointe, a charming woman, who enlightened me and taught me how to make a man happy. Since then, Adolphe has changed in every respect: he has become perfectly delightful. He is the very first to be anxious, alarmed even, when I am going to the play and seven o'clock finds us alone here.—"Ferdinand is coming for you, isn't he?" he says.—Isn't that so, Ferdinand?

FERDINAND.—We are the most affectionate cousins in the world.

THE AFFLICTED YOUNG BRIDE.—Could I ever reach that point?

FERDINAND.—Ah! you are very pretty, madame, and nothing could be easier.

THE WIFE.—*Annoyed.*—Well, good-night, little one.—*The afflicted young bride goes out.*—Ferdinand, you shall pay me for those words.

THE HUSBAND.—*On Boulevard Italien.*—My dear fellow,—*he holds Monsieur de Fischtaminel by his coat-button,*—you are still at the stage where one believes that marriage is founded on passion. Women can, if need be, love but one man, but as for us!— *Mon Dieu!* society cannot subdue nature. Look you, the best plan for a husband and wife is to bestow plenary indulgence on each other, on the condition that appearances are kept up. I am the luckiest husband on earth. Caroline is a devoted friend, she would sacrifice everything to me, even my cousin Ferdinand, if necessary!—you laugh, but I tell you she is ready to do anything for me. You are still floundering about in pompous ideas of dignity, honor, virtue, and social order. Life doesn't come but once, and we must fill it full of pleasure. For two years now, Caroline and I have not exchanged a single sharp word. I have in Caroline a comrade to whom I can tell everything, and who is able to console me in great emergencies. There is not the slightest deception between us, and we know what to expect. Our foregatherings are for revenge—do you understand? And so we have changed our duties into pleasures. We are often happier now than in that insipid season called the honeymoon. She says to me sometimes: "I am cross, leave me, off with you."—The storm falls on my cousin. Caroline no longer assumes her

martyr-like airs, and she speaks kindly of me to the whole world. In fact, she is happy in my pleasure. And as she is a very upright person, she shows the greatest delicacy in dealing with our fortune. My house is well kept up. My wife allows me to dispose of my surplus without any oversight. And there you are. We have oiled the machinery; you put gravel in yours, my dear Fischtaminel. There are but two courses to adopt: the knife of the Moor of Venice, or Joseph's twibill. Othello's costume, my dear fellow, is very unbecoming: it is simply the costume of a Turk in the carnival; for my part, I am a carpenter, like a good Catholic.

CHORUS—*In the salon, in the midst of a ball.*—Madame Caroline is a charming woman!

A WOMAN IN A TURBAN.—Yes, a model of propriety, of dignity.

A WOMAN WITH SEVEN CHILDREN.—Ah! she knew how to manage her husband.

A FRIEND OF FERDINAND.—But she is very fond of her husband. Moreover, Adolphe is a very distinguished man, with abundant experience.

A FRIEND OF MADAME DE FISCHTAMINEL.—He adores his wife. In their house there is no constraint, everyone enjoys himself.

MONSIEUR FOULLEPOINTE.—Yes, theirs is a very pleasant house.

A WOMAN OF WHOM MUCH EVIL IS SAID.—Caroline is kind and obliging, she never speaks ill of anybody.

A DANCER.—*Returning to her place.*—Do you remember what a bore she was in the days when she was intimate with the Descharses?

MADAME DE FISCHTAMINEL.—Oh! she and her husband were like two bundles of thorns—quarrelling all the time.—*Exit Madame de Fischtaminel.*

AN ARTIST.—But Sieur Deschars is dissipated, he frequents the wings; it seems that Madame Deschars sold him her virtue too dear at last.

A BOURGEOISE.—*Alarmed for her daughter by the turn the conversation is taking.*—Madame de Fischtaminel is charming to-night.

A WOMAN OF FORTY.—*Without an engagement.*—Monsieur Adolphe seems as happy as his wife.

THE YOUNG PERSON.—What a handsome man Monsieur Ferdinand is!—*Her mother hastily gives her a little kick.*—What do you want, mamma?

THE MOTHER.—*Gazing fixedly at her daughter.*—A young woman doesn't say that, my dear, of any young man except her fiancé. Monsieur Ferdinand is not a marrying man.

A VERY DÉCOLLETÉE LADY.—*To another no less décolletée.—Sotto voce.*—Look you, my dear, the moral of all this is that the only happy couples are those of four persons.

A FRIEND.—*Whom the author has been imprudent enough to consult.*—Those last words are false.

THE AUTHOR.—Ah! do you think so?

THE FRIEND.—*Who has recently married.*—You use all your ink in crying down social life, on the pretext of enlightening us!—Ah! my dear fellow, there

are couples a hundred, yes, a thousand times happier than these alleged couples of four.

THE AUTHOR.—Well, must we strike out the words and mislead unmarried people?

THE FRIEND.—No, it will be looked upon as the hyphen of a vaudeville couplet!

THE AUTHOR.—One way of inculcating truths.

THE FRIEND.—*Clinging to his opinion.*—Truths destined to pass away.

THE AUTHOR.—*Determined to have the last word.*—What truth is not? When your wife is twenty years older, we will resume this conversation. Perhaps you will then be happy only with a third.

THE FRIEND.—You revenge yourself very cruelly for your inability to describe happy families.

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